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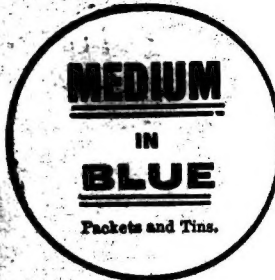


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PAQUITA.

By H. N. Ross.

I.

Her baptismal name, which did not fit her, was Francisca Grimanosa; her pet name, which was a caress in itself, was Paquita, and she was the youngest of the seven beautiful Concha y Seminario sisters.

On Sundays and feast days, after mass, the sisters used to walk from the great Church of San Pedro along Calle Serena, through the marble-paved portales, and down the prettily tiled Calle Esmeralda, the Regent Street of Las Reinas, the capital of the Republic of Perador. There was quite a buzz among the young fellows standing in the shop doorways as they passed, but the remarks—intentionally loud, for such is the custom in Las Reinas—never called a symptom of consciousness to the face of any one of the beautiful seven.

A pretty procession they formed, in their lace mantillas, and it seemed so long that one graceless youth, who had been brought up for the priesthood, christened them the Eleven Thousand Virgins. First came Paquita, alone, as the youngest; then Herminia and Margarita, the next in age; then Isabel and Rosita; and lastly, Maria and Ursula.

It was a Sunday morning about half-past eleven, and Saynor and I were returning from our breakfast in the "Hotel Comercio" by way of Calle Esmeralda. Saynor was a tall young mining engineer of some two-and-twenty years, with curly fair hair and dark blue eyes, and a general look of boyishness and enjoyment of life which rapidly made him a favourite with the people he met. He had only arrived in Las Reinas a few days previously, and I had undertaken to show him round the quaint old city which still displays so many traces of its former magnificence and wealth.

We had almost reached the top of Calle Esmeralda when the Concha girls turned out of the portales, and came face to face with us. Saynor gazed at them, and then ejaculated:

"What ripping girls!"

That they all heard was obvious from the smile which began with Paquita and ended with Ursula.

"You silly young cuckoo!" I growled, as I raised my hat to them; "they speak English as well as you do."

I felt annoyed with him, because I myself was chiefly to blame. I had not checked him when he had made remarks upon the other girls whom we had passed, as I was aware that English was little known in Las Reinas.

He looked subdued for fully thirty seconds. Then he began in a beseeching tone:

"I say, Dallas, will you introduce me to those girls? That second one on the near side was simply perfection. The flapper didn't look half bad, either."

"May I ask which of them you call the 'flapper'?" I said severely. I was still sore, as I knew how Herminia and Margarita would laugh at me the next time I called, and I didn't like being laughed at by Margarita.

"Why, the little one, the half-fledged youngster," replied Saynor. "But about that introduction?"

"Oh, well, I'll see," was my answer; and with this, Saynor had to be content.

He evidently was a young man of perseverance, however, as I discovered two days later. It was the custom of the Conchas to receive every Tuesday evening, and it was my custom not to fail to present myself. Margarita was always very much cooler to me the next time I called when I had happened to miss a week.

On arriving on this particular Tuesday evening, as I entered the drawing-room, the first person who attracted my attention was my friend Saynor, seated on a settee beside Herminia, and apparently enjoying himself to the best of his ability. I may mention that we very seldom met any strangers at these receptions. Selwyn, the sub-manager of the Banco de Londres y Las Reinas, Marsden, an industrious broker, and I were the three most constant visitors, and our course of procedure was invariably the same. When we arrived we shook hands all round; then Selwyn sat down by Maria, Marsden moved into a corner with Herminia, while I made for the vacant place by Margarita.

Saynor's smile was annoyingly triumphant as I said good evening to him, and I bestowed an inward anathema upon Selwyn, whom he had evidently induced to bring him. However, Margarita soon changed the current of my thoughts, and then Marsden came in.

Saynor, of course, did not know that he was trespassing on Marsden's ground, and consequently did not deserve the look that Marsden gave him.

Herminia was the worst offender of the two, but Marsden knew better than attempt to punish Herminia with annihilating looks. She was apparently occupied in teaching Saynor Spanish, but why she should have chosen the verb "to love," which is more irregular in Spanish than in most other languages, is best known to herself. However, it was Saynor who put a stop to the little comedy.

"Where is your youngest sister?" he asked.

"Paquita? Oh, she is not supposed to be out yet," replied Herminia.

Marsden, however, had overheard the question, and immediately went over to Ursula, who, as the eldest sister, was regarded as the one in authority.

"Can't Paquita come in to-night?" he asked. "I've brought some sweets for her."

Ursula was of a sweet and unsuspecting nature, and gave her permission.

The Mayordomo, who had just brought in tea, was dispatched with the message, and in a very short space of time Paquita made her appearance.

She ensconced herself on a settee by Ursula, and Saynor, deserting Herminia, wheeled a low chair in front of them,

and began a conversation with Ursula, in which he promptly managed to include Paquita.

We left about ten o'clock, and when I said good-night to Paquita, I was struck by the change in her. There was a new light in her eyes, and childhood had been left behind.

For the next few weeks Saynor was a very constant visitor at the Conchas, and there was little doubt in the mind of anyone who saw him with Paquita that the two were living in a world of their own.

II.

WHILE this love affair was arranging itself, however, the Republic of Perador had reached a very serious crisis. The revolutionists—it is, perhaps, needless to say that there are always revolutionists in Perador—had been gradually gaining ground, and were now entrenched in the immediate vicinity of Las Reinas.

Orella, the present leader of revolt, had accumulated large quantities of Mannlicher and Lee-Metford rifles, of which the Government forces stood in such dread that, when attacking the rebel troops, they usually began with a volley at three miles.

The advantages of this method of attack were obvious. If the montoneros, as the revolutionists were called, were in considerable force, they stood their ground and reciprocated the compliment of the volley, upon which the Government troops retreated to their entrenchments. If the rebels did not feel inclined to fight, they had plenty of time to retreat, and the Peracistas, or Government troops, had strict injunctions to refrain from following them up, so as to avoid falling into an ambush.

This sort of warfare had been going on for more than a year, and Orella had been threatening for some time to make an attack upon Las Reinas. He had sent sundry invitations to Perez, the President, to come out and fight outside the city, but Perez had reasons of his own for declining. He had sent a similar invitation to his predecessor in office, Velasquez, and when that gentleman had accepted and drawn up his troops some five miles to the south of the city, Perez had slipped round and come in by the north.

The palace was empty, and Perez promptly took possession of it, and when Velasquez sent him an invitation similar to his own, he replied excusing himself, and the end of the matter was that poor Velasquez had to give up presiding over the republic and occupy himself more usefully on his cotton estate.

Orella, therefore, found Perez very deaf to his taunts, and at last he determined to attack the city and drive him out at the point of the bayonet.

There had been several false alarms, and more than once we bachelors, who breakfasted and dined at the club or the hotels, had laid in stocks of tinned meats, but so far our periodical Sunday picnics had been the only occasions for making use of our hoards.

Early one morning, however, I heard the unmistakable sounds of rifle shots. Selwyn and Saynor, who occupied sets of rooms immediately over mine, which were on the first floor of a three-storied house, came hurrying into my bedroom. They were both in their pyjamas and slippers.

"Hello, you chaps," I said, "you seem to be in a hurry."

"So would you be if your room was being riddled with bullets, as mine is," said Selwyn. "Those wretched 'quincha' walls wouldn't stop a pellet from a popgun, and the beggars are firing right across from San Pedro into the palace."

For the benefit of those who are unacquainted with the methods of Peradorian revolutions, I may mention that, when an attack is made upon a town, all the church towers are promptly occupied by firing-parties. These buildings are higher than the flat-roofed houses, and every church in Las Reinas which boasts of a tower, bears traces of the somewhat anomalous use to which it has been put.

As Selwyn spoke, we heard the boom of a cannon and the crash of a bell.

"There goes the big bell of San Pedro," I said. "It's done for this time."

We listened to the rush of the cavalry up the street, and heard a horse and rider come down almost under my balcony windows, which projected into the street at some twenty feet above the sidewalk. Curiosity prevailed over our fears for our personal safety. We spread a rug on the balcony floor, on which we threw ourselves. A small panel had been cut out at the end of the balcony, and through the hole we could see parties of combatants at the different block corners. Now and again a bullet crashed through the woodwork of the balcony, so prudence drove us into my sitting-room, but the awful struggle which was taking place outside had a deadly fascination for us.

At length Selwyn looked out of the windows to see if he could get a glimpse of any of the Concha girls. Their house was on the opposite side of the street, and a little higher up than ours. Three bullets crashed through the glass as his head appeared, and flattened themselves against the adobe walls of my rooms. It was only the lighter cane and plaster walls on the second floor which offered no resistance to bullets.

"The girls are all in the front room," said Selwyn excitedly; "their balcony windows are open, and they've got two big looking-glasses fixed at an angle."

This idea struck us as ingenious, and we promptly fixed up a similar arrangement for ourselves. We had seen a good many horrors from the panel-hole, but the looking-glasses revealed similar horrors the whole length of the street.

We could see no fighting now, however, as the Government troops had retreated to their entrenchments in the great Plaza, and the revolutionists were massing themselves to attack.

I looked out from the balcony, for I could now do so with safety, and saw in the street below me a man lying with

his leg under a dead horse. He was groaning pitiably, and as he caught sight of me he cried:

"Agua, señor! Por amor de Dios, agua!"

I turned to Saynor and Selwyn.

"I say, you fellows, there's a Johnny down there dying for a drink of water. I'm going to take him some. Will you come?"

They jumped up, and Selwyn said:

"Have you anything to make a Red Cross flag with, Dallas? It will be some protection if the beggars come round the corner again."

"I'm afraid not," I replied. "The washerwoman appropriated everything that looks like a rag."

"Get a big sheet of paper, and make a cross with red ink," suggested Saynor.

We acted upon his idea, but utilized a shirt instead of paper. Selwyn and Saynor had made free with my ward robe, and a few minutes later we sallied into the street, Selwyn carrying our red-cross banner, Saynor a bottle of brandy, and I a jug of water and a cup. We first attended to the man who had asked me for water. We moved him from under the horse, and after making him as comfortable as we could, we turned up the street to see what we could do for the other wounded who were lying near. As we passed the Conchas' house young Manuel Concha, who had arrived from Huanilla a day or two previously, came out. He called to us:

"Lend me a hand, will you? I want to carry this man," pointing to a wounded trooper, "inside the patio. He's an old servant of ours."

We lifted him up, and carried him through the great doors. As we closed them behind us Maria and Paquita came down the court-yard staircase, and asked if they could be of any assistance.

The immediate result was that Selwyn and Saynor promptly left Manuel and myself to look after the wounded man, and when I went into the house a few minutes later, I found Selwyn chatting to Maria over a glass of sherry and a sandwich, while Saynor was explaining the mechanism of a carbine to Paquita. The weapon belonged to the man we had just brought in, and by it was lying a belt full of cartridges.

We stayed there about half-an-hour, most of which I spent in assuring myself that Margarita had not been frightened to death. As we said good-bye, I heard Paquita whisper to Saynor:

"Take care of yourself, Harold, for my sake."

Poor lad, I had never seen him look so happy as we passed through the patio doors into the afternoon sunlight. As we came under my balcony, the man whom we had first assisted, and whom we had left propped against the wall, begged us to take him in. He moaned with pain as Selwyn and I lifted him. Saynor opened our door with his latch-key, and waved our impromptu banner to Paquita, who was standing at the window watching him.

As he did so, a party of soldiers turned the corner some thirty yards from us. A volley rang out, and Saynor fell. We dropped the wounded man inside the door, and sprang to Saynor.

The soldiers fired again as we dragged him into the house, and another bullet struck him in the body. We hastily closed and barred the door, and then lifted poor Saynor, and carried him upstairs to my room.

We laid him on the sofa, but we needed no doctor to tell us that he was beyond all human aid. There was a small round hole in his forehead between his eyes, so small that it resembled a mark made with the flat end of a pencil. That was the only thought that came to me. A drop of blood oozed from the broken skin, and I wiped it away mechanically.

Selwyn was pacing the room, and his footsteps marked time to my thoughts:

"A pencil mark, a drop of blood."

"Good Heavens! Dallas, look there!"

Selwyn had stepped on to the balcony, and, at his words, full of an awe-struck horror I sprang to his side.

He was pointing to the Conchas' house. It had the usual flat roof, with a balustrade in front. Through the balustrade was protruding the barrel of a carbine, over which we could just see the head of Paquita. Her face was white as the driven snow, her hair was falling in masses on her shoulder round the butt of the carbine, and her lips were set in a look which, please God, I shall never see on the face of a woman again.

Shot after shot she fired into the small mob of soldiers at the corner of the street. I counted the men. Two were lying on the ground wounded or dead, and nine were firing blindly at the little head visible through the balustrade. The stucco on the house was falling in patches, but never a shot touched her.

Two officers with the men were trying to urge them up the street, but they would not move from their corner. A bullet from the carbine struck one of the officers, and he fell. The other drew his sword, and rushing at his men, struck those nearest with the flat of it.

I glanced again at Paquita. I saw her throw out the empty cartridge case and place another set in the chamber of the carbine.

Again a shot rang out from it, and another of the little group pitched forward on his face, his rifle ringing on the pavement as it left his grasp.

Then one man ran forward. Up the street he came, passing beneath us, jumping over the dead bodies in his way, and stopping right opposite to Paquita. He knelt to take steadier aim, and I screamed to her. Whether she heard me or not I do not know, but she paid no heed. The group at the corner had killed her lover, and at that group she continued firing.

Once more a shot rang out, this time from the rifle of the kneeling soldier, and I saw the carbine slip from those childish hands over the lower beam of the balustrade. The trigger-guard caught on the edge as it slipped, and the carbine seemed to hang for ever before it fell. And when I looked again for the little dark head I could only see a tress of hair floating in the breeze.

WHEN IS A BURGLARY NOT A BURGLARY?

AN ARTICLE ALL HOUSEHOLDERS SHOULD READ.

THE nights being now long, dark, and foggy, the gentle burglar is bestirring himself. Having always understood that the law relating to this branch of crime is somewhat hazy, P.W. consulted a certain eminent barrister, who enjoys a truly colossal practice.

The legal nuts with which this gentleman presented P.W. requires a deal of cracking. Said he: "Suppose P.W. persuades one of its staff to break into the office of a rival firm and steal the copies of next week's issue, and he does so, you become an accessory. But supposing you counsel a thief to kill one man and he kills another, or to burn down one house and he burns another, or to steal a horse and he steals a cow, or to steal a black horse and he steals a white one, in these cases you will not be an accessory, because the felony you recommended was not performed but another one."

Restoratives having been applied, P.W. recovered and the conversation continued.

"Some few years ago a professor of the gentle art of burglary laid his plans, with the connivance of one of the servants, for annexing the valuables of a well-known R.A. residing at St. John's Wood.

"The confederate to whom he intrusted the carrying out of the job somehow mistook the house, and broke into the one next door, where he was promptly collared by a huge mustiff.

"This capture so riled him that he split on his chief, whose lawyer, however, knowing something of the law, took care to prove that the instructions his client gave was to break into next door.

"Justice had been waiting for this man for years; but he escaped its meshes this time."

What constitutes a burglary? Householders will probably say "breaking into and entering a person's dwelling-house in the night with intent to commit a felony."

"Wait a bit," said the lawyer to P.W.; "what do you mean by the night?"

"The law answers this by a statute passed in 1861, and which declared that night commences at 9 p.m., and finishes at 6 a.m. the following morning.

"Now, supposing," said the great lawyer, "you break the skylight window of a dwelling-house you intend burgling at 5 a.m., but, being disturbed, you are not able to enter the house till 6.15 a.m.

"The night finishes at 6 a.m., and, therefore, there will be a flaw in the indictment if you are charged with burglary, for burglary is a night offence. Remember this: Judges have to interpret the law literally as they find it.

"Now, as to a dwelling-house. You think that is clear. Your description would be a house that a person dwells in. Very good. A tenant takes his family to the seaside, draws down the blinds, and locks the place up. Burglars break in; they are caught and convicted—for the house, although untenanted, is still a dwelling-house, because the tenant intends resuming his occupancy on his return—but suppose before the burglary he had written his landlord that he should not return to the house again, then the house would not be a dwelling-house, and any thief who effected an entrance during the night could not be charged with burglary. The crime would be larceny, the penalties attaching to which are well known.

"I remember the case of a family who commenced moving into their new home late one evening. Some friends calling at their new residence, they decided to postpone the transfer of the rest of their belongings till the following day. During the night some thieves broke in and carried them off, and it was held that this did not constitute burglary, as the family being permanently in the house, it could not, till a fresh tenant was obtained, be described as a dwelling-house. It was larceny of course.

"To constitute a burglary there must be breaking into and entering. In the case of a burglar who got into a house through a window which he found open, there would be an entry, but not a burglary, as the law defines burglary as breaking into and entering.

"It is to be hoped that this opinion, coming, as it does, from one of the first authorities on criminal law, will lead to people closing their windows at night during the burglary season.

"By inserting the words 'breaking into,' the law gives citizens to understand that windows should be closed.

"A thief who creeps through an open window is not guilty of burglary, because he does not break into; but if he enters down the chimney, he does, for a chimney is a necessary opening, and requires the protection of the law.

"The raising of the latch of a door not bolted constitutes with robbery a burglary, so also does the raising of a window which is down but not fastened."

"But supposing the window is a little open, even if the thief has to open it more to get inside," said P.W., "is that burglary?"

"No, and it is not burglary if an arm is inserted through a broken pane to raise the catch, unless the hole is widened. Should this be done, the burglar will probably have cause to regret his clumsiness.

"Here are particulars of a very curious case, the points

of law in which exercised the attention of judges for some time.

"Two men named Smith and Johnson proposed to the groom of a certain well-known M.P., who at the time was out of town, that on a certain night he should get rid of the other servants and then admit them into the house. The groom after consenting communicated with the police, who on the appointed evening hid themselves in the house.

"The first thief, Johnson, on presenting himself was admitted, and whilst peeping into the plate closet was locked in.

"The groom then admitted Jones who was seized by the police in the very act of packing up the plate basket.

"Some of the judges thought the case came under constructive burglary, which amongst other things includes obtaining entrance by means of false pretences for the purpose of committing a burglary.

"One point caused much division of opinion.

"Was there a felonious breaking in? Some said yes, others no, as the door was opened by the groom in the interests of the master. And it being therefore lawfully open, it was decided there was no felonious breaking in.

"Another point fiercely discussed was whether Johnson, as charged in the indictment, was guilty of stealing with Jones, who was caught red-handed, whilst Johnson, on entering an apartment which happened to be the plate-room, was locked in.

"It was ultimately decided that, as Johnson was already in legal custody at the moment Jones collared the plate-basket, he could not be held responsible for anything done by his confederate. But he was held to be an accessory before the fact.

"Although neither was found guilty of breaking into the house, the law, notwithstanding, was equal this time to the occasion, and both were convicted, Jones for larceny and Johnson as an accessory before the fact."

It Looked Bad.

A CERTAIN young lady, against whom appearances certainly looked dark, once had an amusing experience of unjust judgment. She went out on a stormy day and was unfortunate enough to have her umbrella turned inside out. Her two sisters were equally unlucky, and on the following day the young lady volunteered to take the three umbrellas to be repaired.

Promising to call for them before she returned home in the afternoon, she went about her business, part of which was to do some shopping in a large city establishment. On rising to leave the shop she mechanically put out her hand to take possession of an umbrella that was close by. It looked like her own, and for the moment she had forgotten the accident. She was soon brought to her senses.

"That is my umbrella," said a sharp voice at her side, and a hand was laid on her arm to detain her.

Apologising for her thoughtlessness, she left the shop, did the rest of her business, and called for her umbrellas. In the bus she met an indignant pair of eyes. Where had she seen them before? They scanned first her face and then the burden she carried. "Three of them!" muttered the owner of the eyes, and it was evident that she referred to the umbrellas. "Three! She's not done badly for one day."

As she spoke she grasped her own umbrella tightly and moved farther away from the dangerous young lady. The colour came into the cheeks of the latter. The speaker was her friend of the morning, and she evidently believed that the umbrellas had been stolen.

PRECISELY.—Ignoramus: "You just used the expression *fin de siècle*. What does that mean?"

Cultured One: "It is French, and means 'end of the century.'"

Ignoramus: "Then why don't you say 'end of the century?'"

Cultured One: "Because that isn't French."

"BOFFKIN has got himself into a nice fix."

"How?"

"He wrote an article on 'The Ideal Wife' for a woman's paper last month."

"Well, what's that got to do with his present fix?"

"Somebody told his wife about it, and she's been reading the thing over and over during the past two days, trying to discover a single trait wherein his ideal resembles her. She hasn't found it, and Boffkin is taking his meals in town."

OLD HADCASH: "I've decided to take young Sharp-leigh into business with me as soon as he and my daughter get back from their honeymoon."

Bullion Bonds: "But I thought you saw no good in the fellow."

Old HADCASH: "I didn't at first, but I've changed my mind. I told him he couldn't have my daughter till he had at least £1,000 in the bank. He got me to put it in writing, and then went out and borrowed the £1,000 on the strength of becoming my son-in-law. Such business ability as that mustn't be allowed to go to waste."

THE FUN THAT BIG PEOPLE LIKE.

IN THEIR RANKS ARE FOUND GREAT AMATEUR SCULLERS, SWORDSMEN, AND NAVIGATORS.

It is a cardinal political belief with some folks that our statesmen, authors, and public men generally should be judged, not by their works or speeches, but by their proficiency in amusing themselves. If they display proficiency in any particular form of recreation then it follows that their views must be sound, and they are the men for high places.

As a rule it is athletics that the "brainless" men go in for. Perhaps you may have noticed, while Parliament has been sitting, a light pair-oared skiff set off from the neighbourhood of St. Stephen's.

If one of the oarsmen attracted your notice as being a tall, fine, cavalry-looking man, and the other a slighter and clean-shaven one, you have seen Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Reginald McKenna, M.P., start off on one of their weekly spins up the Thames. Both are expert oarsmen; they keep themselves in good practice on account of the annual challenge they issue to their brother M.P.s to row over a given course of the river. But, though both Sir Edward Clarke and Mr. Leonard Courtney, among others, delight in sculling, the challenge has not yet been taken up.

Perhaps this is because Sir Charles has, as an athlete, so fearsome a reputation. For years he was accounted one of the best rapier fencers in Europe, and Sir Henry Irving—who, by reason of closely studying the duel scene in *Hamlet*, became first fascinated with fencing, and then a master swordsman—has often had a set-to with foils with Sir Charles.

Most people think that Mr. Arthur Balfour, apart from golfing—and, of course, philosophy—has no recreation outside politics; but that is a great mistake. Not only was he the first Cabinet Minister to ride up Downing Street on a "bike"—much to the consternation of the officials—but he's very nearly prouder of having beaten Mr. Morton, M.P., in the House of Commons Lawn Tennis Tournament than anything else.

Almost the first bigwig to imitate Mr. Balfour as a golfer was Mr. ex-Home Secretary Asquith, and Sir John Gorst instantly went one better than his chief in cycling by riding a red machine! Indeed, it is said that Mr. Balfour, than whom there is no more unathletic-looking man, has done more than anyone else to spread rational athleticism in Parliament.

It will come as a shock to most people—certainly to most politicians—to learn that Lord Salisbury had anything in common with Mr. Parnell, seeing that the two were strenuously opposed.

Nevertheless, both took an intense interest in practical and experimental chemistry, and even now Lord Salisbury spends evening after evening, and when possible day after day, in the magnificently appointed laboratory at Hatfield. He probes, sifts, and analyses, much in the same spirit that he examines an opponent's arguments in the Upper Chamber.

No man works harder at his recreation than the Marquis, not even Dr. Grace, who, by-the-way, describes cricket as his.

Writing-plays, even when you translate them, is not by any means so easy a task as some would-be dramatists think it is, but it is by no means certain that Mr. Sydney Grundy, whose comedies have charmed so many thousands, does not work harder at his recreation than his occupation. Only one thing does Mr. Grundy, who is a born navigator, enjoy more than steering a vessel within an ace of a rock, or through some tricky passage, and that is astronomical investigation.

He will spend hour on hour, even after a hard day's work, in prying into the affairs of other worlds than ours. Then next morning he is as ready as ever to write about this one.

It's refreshing to find that authors, at any rate, have not listened in vain to the teachings of Emerson and Morris, and have found their recreation in manual labour. Mr. Alfred Austin, for instance, gardens; Mr. Rider Haggard goes one better, and is a workaday farmer in Norfolk; Mr. Christie Murray finds his pleasure in sketching, which, though head work, is hand work also; but Sir Walter Besant, a notable exception to the rule, says his chief recreation is in "looking on."

One of the hardest tasks Sir Arthur Sullivan has to perform is the writing out of his own score, and it would be but natural to think that the recreation he chose was one giving rest to the fingers. But as a matter of fact Sir Arthur is prouder of the books he owns than the operas he has written. Books, too, provide Dr. Adler, the Chief Rabbi, with amusement, as he spends his spare time cataloguing and arranging his valuable library of Eastern MSS.

John Burns' recreation is typically democratic, and you can see him nearly every Saturday afternoon during the summer in Battersea Park knocking up a huge score off the bowling of one of his constituents—that is, when he is not looking on at the Oval.

Then Labby's recreation is smoking (not pipes but cigarettes); Earl de la Warr often instructs the local Fire Brigade, of which he is captain, when not engaged with company work. George Gissing recuperates by travel, but if the cheapest pleasures be the best, that of George Meredith and John Davidson, are undoubtedly the best selected. For those two distinguished men of letters say that their principal method of recuperation is—walking.

"A Dash for a Throne" is the title of the new serial which has just started in the ATHLETIC RECORD. It is by Mr. A. W. Marchmont, the author of "The Swordsman."

Questions Worth Answering.

REPLIES.

4316. How may the Comparative Longevity of Professional Men be Accounted for?

In the first place, the struggle for existence begins later in professional life than in other careers. The professional man seldom begins his work much before three-and-twenty, while the business man or labourer goes to work at the age of sixteen. Thus the professional man has seven clear years of freedom from responsibility, moderate work and healthy existence. Secondly, the occupation of the professional man generally takes him to a considerable extent into the open air, and is very seldom entirely sedentary. Thirdly, the professional man generally enjoys that modest competence which saves him at once on the one hand from starvation or penury, and on the other from idleness and excess. Fourthly, his holidays are generally ample. Fifthly, in the Church at any rate, and to a less extent in the other professions, his livelihood generally depends on his living a sober and moral life. Sixthly, professional callings are exposed to very few special dangers. Lastly, since even a minor ailment often unfits a man entirely for professional work, he has a special motive in taking particular care of his health.

4317. Why did the Romans Take such Trouble to Build Aqueducts when they Knew that Water Rises to its own Level?

The principal reason undoubtedly was that they had no suitable material to make pipes which would stand the enormous pressure inseparable from an underground system. Lead was out of the question for the purpose because the pipes would have to be made so disproportionately thick, and, besides, water flowing for miles through lead would be poisonous. Short lead and clay pipes were used by them in their cities and houses for the supply of baths; but without cast iron, which they did not possess, they could not have made pipes to carry water long distances. Lastly, the water brought to Rome was strongly impregnated with lime, and this would have caused a great incrustation in pipes and necessitated frequent opening and cleaning, whereas an aqueduct once built, would, as events have proved, last for a very long time with a very moderate amount of repairs.

4320. What was the Most Absurd Military Expedition of the Present Century?

For absolute imbecility of inception and conduct it would be difficult to beat the Walcheren Expedition, even if all the other centuries were taken into account. It took place in March, 1809, or, at least, it was intended to do so, and its object was supposed to be a diversion against Napoleon in favour of Austria. It was perfectly well known that about the most unhealthy spot in Europe had been selected. It was also known that Lord Chatham was about the worst man who could have been chosen to command that or any other expedition. Finally, owing to hopeless mismanagement, its departure was delayed until July, when Austria had already been crushed at Wagram, and was past assistance. Nevertheless, the now purposeless expedition set out in the shape of an armada of forty ships, conveying 40,000 troops. The island was seized, and then the troops began to die wholesale of fever. The greater part of the expedition was recalled, but 15,000 men were left to guard an island that did not need guarding, since no one wanted it, and within a month half of these men had either perished or were dying. Absolutely nothing was gained in compensation for the enormous loss of life and treasure. For utter inutility of purpose and gross mismanagement the Crimean war would probably come next. It was, perhaps, the most futile war of modern times.

4318. Which was Probably the First Cereal Cultivated?

From our actual knowledge, this would appear to be wheat, because grains of it have been found, not only sealed up in vessels discovered in Egyptian tombs of very high antiquity, but also in the lake dwellings of Switzerland, which belong to the Stone Age. It was grown by the Chinese some 3,000 years before the Christian era; but there is no reason to believe that other cereals, such as barley, rice, and millet, were not cultivated at the same time. It is a significant fact that all these cereals, if left to themselves, lapse back into a wild state and become useless as food-stuffs. From this it is plain that they are artificial developments of primitive grasses; but which of them was the first to be so developed there is no means of showing.

4321. What is the Origin of the Name "Silhouette"?

Etienne de Silhouette was appointed French Minister of Finance in 1759 in order to reorganise the resources of France, which had been impoverished by the war of 1759. He soon made himself ridiculous by the economies he recommended. A party of French wits, in emulation of his propensities, pledged themselves to cut off the tails of their coats, to carry wooden snuff-boxes, and to have their portraits taken by cutting out their profiles with a pair of scissors and paper. The *Journal Officiel de Paris* (1869) states that Etienne de Silhouette used to amuse himself by tracing silhouettes on the wall of his house at Bry-sur-Marne. No doubt the wits regarded this as another instance of his economy; and thus the name of Silhouette became attached to these cheap and worthless portraits. The art of drawing silhouettes is itself extremely ancient and was practised by the Etruscans. Swift, who died in 1745, refers to it as a well-known method of portraiture.

4322. Of Non-European Nations, which Came Nearest to Success in War against Britain?

Although at first glance the United States, that in the War of Independence not only held their own but even worsted Britain, appears to supply the answer, a little reflection will show that, inasmuch as they are an offshoot not of Europe only but of England, they can scarcely be regarded as applicable. Against the Boers, likewise, who certainly made a successful stand against the British arms, may be urged their European descent. The most pertinent answer therefore, seems to be the Afghans, who have not only in past times presented a bold front to Britain's forces, but have twice inflicted upon their European enemies disastrous defeats—the first time in the Khyber Pass, when a British army of 4,000 men, retiring from Cabul, was totally annihilated (January 6th–13th, 1842); the second, at Maiwand, when General Burrows, was defeated in July, 1880, by the Afghans under Ayoub Khan. These two disasters do not, however, make up the sum total of our loss, for during the time (nearly fifty years) that the protracted struggle virtually continued, many distinguished Englishmen—Sir A. Binn, Sir W. Macnaghten, and Sir L. Cavagnari, to mention but three—besides others of lesser rank, fell. Among other non-European nations which for a while successfully resisted the British arms may be mentioned the Zulus, who gained a signal victory over Lord Chelmsford at Isandhlwana.

4324. Which is the Most Iniquitous Blot on our Criminal Law?

The legal fiction that Justice cannot err. Nothing can be more abhorrent to all principles of morality than the fact of an innocent man being wrongly condemned, degraded to the level of a felon, kept in prison until some accident or other puts his innocence beyond doubt—and then being "pardoned" for an offence he never committed, and sent back into the world ruined, and to a certain extent, hopelessly disgraced by the bungling of others. If anything could be more repugnant to British notions of fair play than this, it would be the further fact that such a man has no claim to compensation for the ruin of his life. Next to this would come the iniquitous system of

keeping committed persons in prison for weeks, and in some cases for months, before they can avail themselves of the safeguard of personal liberty—trial by jury. There are far too many cases in which unfortunate people whom appearances have been against being committed for trial on circumstantial evidence, and then, weeks and months afterwards, being found absolutely innocent. In this case, too, no compensation is given, although in nine cases out of ten such an imprisonment must mean ruin. It is not too much to say that these two blots on our criminal system are a disgrace alike to our honour and our civilisation.

4325. Which Country has Suffered Most from a Successful Revolution?

Hayti. Since the successful revolt of the population in the time of the French Revolution, the country has gone steadily backward. Frightful crimes marked the struggle which has been called the most vindictive war on record. Capital was driven from the island and the European population massacred. Although Hayti is one of the most fertile of the West Indies the agriculture is backward and there is little commerce. The fine harbours are not utilised under a nominal Christianity, the most degrading superstitions flourish, and even cannibalism is not unknown. Politically, Hayti vacillates between despotism and anarchy; but official corruption, judicial iniquity, and every form of political evil remain always in full swing. Civil war is more or less chronic, and finance is in inextricable confusion. As a colony of France, Hayti might have flourished; as an independent state it can only be characterised as a fraud and a failure.

4326. Is there any Substance in General Use which would be Quite Irreplaceable if the Supplies of it were Exhausted?

There are many such substances, both of vegetable and mineral origin, but perhaps the best example is indiarubber. Leather is the only substance by which, as a rule, it can be replaced; but although tougher, the animal product has not the elasticity and lightness, nor the adaptability of the vegetable product, and for many purposes is quite inadmissible. Of goods that cannot be manufactured without indiarubber in some form an almost endless list might be given, including such things in common use as waterproof articles of dress, bicycle tyres, surgical instruments of many kinds, billiard-tables, lawn tennis balls, etc. If a substitute could be found it would certainly be welcome, for indiarubber has many drawbacks, such as its short life, and tendency to become sticky in hot climates and brittle in cold. The bicyclist would replace it if he could, and so would the army surgeon, who dreads the failure of this necessary but fickle substance in his medical stores. Of metals iron would be found to be the answer to the question.

4329. Has a "Stranger" ever Voted in a Division in the House of Commons?

Strangers have on several occasions made their way into the "House" itself while the members were sitting, and, on one occasion, a stranger actually voted in a division. This occurred on February 11th, 1771, when as the "Parliamentary History" relates, during a debate on the repeal of part of the Nullum Tempus Act, "it happened that amongst the members coming in on the division, a stranger, who had continued in the lobby, after it was cleared, had come in, and was told 'as one of the 'noes.' The stranger was brought to the bar, and, by general consent of the House, was dismissed with a caution from the Speaker not to be guilty of a like offence again" ("Parliamentary Hist.," Vol. XVII, p. 34). The members then voted again on the question before them. A thing stranger still happened in 1875. Two strangers walked in during a debate and took seats in the body of the house. They sat unnoticed for more than half an hour. Then a division was called, and not understanding what was happening they remained seated till they were noticed by the Sergeant-at-Arms. As the doors were locked, and might not be opened till after the division, the strangers were taken upstairs to the gallery. It was thought advisable to take no public notice of the action.

QUESTIONS.

4351. Is it possible to cut out square holes by machinery?
4352. Has a Member of Parliament ever been punished by the House for divulging the debates?
4353. Of Britain's voluntarily abandoned conquests, which would be most valuable to her now?
4354. Has the Isle of Wight ever had a separate king of its own since the Norman Conquest?
4355. Which country suffered most from defending another country from an aggressor?
4356. Does frowning really assist concentration of thought?
4357. Why does one generally place one's hand on the seat of a pain?
4358. Which industry, other than the manufacture of war material, is most benefited by a war?
4359. In which parts of the United Kingdom is land likely to rise most in value during the next half century?
4360. Did any nation anticipate the English in the discovery of vaccination?

CONDITIONS.

We shall be glad to receive from our readers replies to any of the questions asked here. Each reply must bear the writer's name and address. We shall print the best reply to each question, and shall pay at the rate of two guineas a column for all matter printed. The same reader may send replies to any number of queries, whether his own or not. Envelopes should be marked "Replies" in the top left-hand corner, and answers to the questions in any form of the paper must reach us by first post on the Monday of the week following that for which the paper is dated. Payment will only be made for replies published. Authorities on which replies are based must be given where possible. Half-a-crown will be paid on publication for every question received which is considered worthy of insertion.

AN INKY WASTE.—"Why do they call Africa the 'Dark Continent'?"
"Because there's so much black ink shed over it."

A FLOURISHING TRADE.—"How is your son getting along?"
"Flourishing."
"What's his business?"
"He's a trumpeter."

MRS. OLDRICH: "Yes, that is my daughter's piano, but she has scarcely touched it since she has been married."
MRS. NOORICH: "Jest the same with my darter an' 'er typewriter."

"TOMMY," asked a mother of her four-year-old son, "where did that hole in the window come from?"
"I don't know, mamma," replied the little fellow.
"Are you sure you don't?" she asked.
"Course I am," answered Tommy. "I throwed my ball awhile ago, and then I saw the hole, but, honestly, I don't now know where it came from."

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RAILWAY CARS THAT HAVE TRAVELLED ON TWO WHEELS.

SOME CURIOUS ESCAPES OF EXPRESS TRAINS.

A PARTICULARLY NARROW shave was that which happened to the Flying Scotchman some years ago. The train was a long one, and in the fore part of it was a milk van coupled immediately next to the engine, so that, had anything gone wrong with it, the whole of the rest of the train must have come to grief.

All went well with the express until Orewa was passed, when the fireman called the driver's attention to this particular van, which was rolling about in the most alarming fashion. The air brake was then applied and the train brought to a standstill in less than three hundred yards, when an examination was made of the rolling truck.

It was seen that the train had been saved from utter wreckage by a sheer miracle, for both the front wheels of the van and their axle had become detached, and in another few minutes the vehicle would have come crash to the ground, and many a traveller would have gone to his death.

Even more wonderful was an escape of the Flying Dutchman. This famous express always makes a tremendous pace when travelling over the stretch of line from Reading, through Twyford to Taplow, because between these points there are nine miles of line, which are straight as a ruler, and so beautifully laid, that an engine has attained a speed of over eighty miles an hour upon them.

It was on this stretch that the express in question was travelling at a speed varying between sixty-five and seventy miles an hour, when a platelayer happened to look at one of the axle boxes of a composite carriage, and saw that it was on fire.

Knowing how dangerous this firing might be, the man threw down his pick and ran at full speed to the nearest signal-box, where the signalman at once sent a message saying, "Stop the train." It was easier said than done, however, for the "Dutchman" was going at such a pace that it was only at Hayes, eleven miles further on, that they got the signals against her and pulled her up.

An examination of the carriage was at once made by the guard and the stationmaster of Hayes, and then it was seen that the wheel which had fired had melted completely from the axle, and was absolutely hanging loose in the sockets.

Had the train crossed a point or rounded a curve, a terrible disaster would have happened.

This old Flying Dutchman is a very lucky train; she has had several other shaves of one sort or another.

At Reading station the main line runs clear of the platform, the connection to this being by a loop. In the old days, before block-signals were introduced, it is said that the great express came tearing into the station, and, instead of going clear down the main line, she took the loop, dashed past the platform at sixty miles an hour, rushed round on to the main line, and so into safety. When one considers that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this loop line would have been crowded with traffic at the hour of the expresses passing, one can see how narrow was the shave.

Or, again, if local tradition is of any value, she once ran off the line at Exeter, and though she was travelling at a high rate of speed, not one person was injured.

Indeed, the old engine simply went into a ploughed field, cut it up for fifty yards, rolled on her side, and then lay still, while the carriages all kept upright, and were uninjured.

A report of an accident on the Great Northern Railway is curious.

The account said that the driver of an up express suddenly noticed something the matter with his engine, and on pulling up he found one of the driving wheels missing, the said wheel having become completely detached from the locomotive, and being discovered a quarter of a mile down the line.

That such a loss should not have thrown the engine off the rails is almost inconceivable.

Perhaps the most alarming situation in which railway travellers were ever placed was on one of the Alpine railways, where the occupants of a carriage suddenly made the fearful discovery that their vehicle was on fire.

There was no bell to communicate with the driver, and though they screamed and cried, they were not heard for some considerable time.

Moreover, the train was at the time running on the brink of a high precipice, and had the body of the carriage become detached from the wheels, the whole of the passengers would have been dashed to pieces on the crags five hundred feet below them.

Luckily a signalman at last saw what was the matter, and pulled the driver up, but only just in time, for many of those in the ill-fated carriage were badly scorched, and the vehicle was just becoming freed from its wheels.

A very close shave was experienced by the Montreal express, when a gang of wreckers pulled up the rails a hundred yards from the bridge, and then waited for the train.

The driver, seeing the obstruction, pulled up, and the robbers sacked the vans; then, holding a pistol at the

engineer's head, they told him to drive the train into the river.

This the man refused to do, so they shot him, and were about to finish the passengers, when a band of armed men with a sheriff turned up, and killed three of the villains as the band made off on horseback.

Another very narrow escape from calamity was that of the Granville express on the sharp curve at Chatham. Some man, knowing the dangerous nature of the stretch of line, placed a rail just on the curve, and then waited to see the express wrecked.

The driver was a man of pluck, however, and instead of slackening speed, when he would have certainly gone into the houses of Rochester, he turned on full steam, and charged the obstacle, clearing it at the charge, as it were, and keeping the metals.

Equally narrow was the shave of the Brighton express at the famous Box Hill tunnel.

Here there was a large earth slip one evening, so large that the mouth of the tunnel was completely blocked up, and had a train charged the debris nothing but disaster could have resulted.

Luckily, a platelayer was the first to learn what had happened, and running down the line, he met the express, waved his arms, and brought her up so that the buffer almost touched the fall of earth.

A man who travelled some time ago in an up-Scotch express, narrates a curious incident of a narrow escape the train had.

When nearing the Alexandra Park, and as they went by a crossing, he felt a little jerk and oscillation of the carriage.

He got out at King's Cross, and, curious to know what might have occurred, went to look at the engine, being not a little surprised to see that the right buffer was smashed completely off, that there was a big dent in the boiler and other marks of injury.

He asked the driver what the matter was; and then he learnt that a goods train had been drawn into a siding, but that the brake van had been left slightly protruding over the main line, so that the engine caught it, cut the end clean off, and went serenely on, the driver jamming on all speed for the charge, and so making sure of it.

If We Didn't Have to Eat.

LIFE would be an easy matter

If we didn't have to eat,

If we never had to utter,

"Won't you pass the bread and butter;

Likewise push along the platter

Full of meat?"

Yes, if food were obsolete

Life would be a jolly treat

If we didn't—shine or shower,

Old or young, 'bout every hour—

Have to eat, eat, eat, eat, eat—

"I would be jolly if we didn't have to eat!

We could save a lot of money

If we didn't have to eat.

Could we cease our busy buying,

Baking, broiling, brewing, frying,

Life would then be, oh, so sunny

And complete!

And we wouldn't fear to greet

Every grocer in the street

If we didn't—man or woman,

Every hungry, helpless human—

Have to eat, eat, eat, eat, eat—

We'd save money if we didn't have to eat!

All our worry would be over

If we didn't have to eat.

Would the butcher, baker, grocer,

Get our hard-earned money? No, sir!

We would then be right in clover,

Cool and sweet;

Want and hunger we would cheat,

And we'd get there with both feet

If we didn't—poor or wealthy,

Halt or nimble, sick or healthy—

Have to eat, eat, eat, eat, eat—

We'd be happy if we didn't have to eat!

CHEAP ENOUGH.—"If you haven't brought home a canary! Of all the extravagant people, John Smith—" "But, my dear, I bought this for a song."

A SLANGY PERSON.—"I'm not in it," said the traveller, as he stood on the station platform, and watched the last train disappear in the distance.

MASCULINE.—"She has a masculine mouth, don't you think?"

"Very. I fancy she couldn't hold more than a dozen pins in it to save her life."

"A MAN can die for his country but once," said the Court Philosopher.

"I presume," was the Chinese Emperor's comment, "that you are quoting something written before my day."

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN MADE TO ORDER.

A PERSON WHO TEACHES PEOPLE HOW TO BEHAVE.

THE wealth of this country has so enormously increased during the past few years, that Society has had to widen its portals to make room for those who, mainly on the score of their wealth, clamour for admittance.

In many cases these claimants, for all their money, are so entirely devoid of even the semblance of good breeding, that a little preliminary polishing becomes absolutely necessary before the new region is entered.

The belief that the witchery of a gracious, genial manner can be imparted by instruction, when once the husks of ill breeding are removed, has led to the birth of still another calling, viz., the aristocratic lady in reduced circumstances, who, for a fee, initiates ladies and gentlemen into the secrets of a dignified and courteous deportment.

"There is nothing new about the idea," said the lady to whom P.W. addressed himself. "The customers of my predecessors were the sons and daughters of persons, who, after living all their life over the shop for the sake of their children, moved into the suburbs."

"Do you find the work arduous?" P.W. asked.

"Sometimes. Slang expressions are difficult to eradicate. One of my present pupils gives me a deal of trouble. He is the son of an African gold king. His conversation is entirely made up of slang. 'Doesn't that cigar smell a treat,' he said to me this morning when I was instructing him how to pass his cigar-case round. Another pupil will persist in talking about himself. A dreadfully dull young man. 'How are they to know I am a gentleman unless I talk about myself,' he says. Dreadful!"

"Speaking generally, however, ladies and gentlemen are born, not made. Hopelessly vulgar people, whether well born or not, I can do nothing with. The instincts to behave nicely must be there. All I can do is to develop them."

"Do good looks assist the formation of manners?"

"No. Three of my pupils—sisters—the plainest girls in the world, bring sunshine with them wherever they go. They were introduced to me on the death of their uncle, who left them each an independency. Having been much neglected and left to get their living as machinists, which means that they had contracted a kind of Bohemian vulgarity, it was hard work at first, but when I handed them over a few weeks since to the lady who has agreed to board, lodge, and introduce them into Society for £600 a-year, their style was ir- -proachable."

"The method is simplicity itself. When a lady, for instance, comes to me, I sound her nature; if I find she is more amiable and sympathetic than cold and brilliant, I teach her to listen well, and have a tear for ever, sorrow, and a smile for every joy. Lack of conversational ability is not perceived when sympathetic listening is well done. Then the smile, sad or joyous, which hovers perpetually round the lips, I train to look unforced."

"One of my pupils a few years since was a companion in the house of a well-known Society lady. One of the visitors was a gentleman who had recently published a novel. It was a dreadfully weak thing, and the entire family shunned it with the exception of the help who found it full of interest. Acting on her advice he has written others. They are to be married next month."

"What about people who dislike listening?"

"It would not be so bad if they were really good talkers. They give me a deal of trouble. They will talk about the weather. It is these sort of people who have such a fondness for pet words or slang phrases. Women are much easier to mould than men. They soon get accustomed to good clothes and spontaneous conversation, and although they use too much scent, and scrutinise the surroundings, such as furniture and each other's clothes, too minutely, and prefer tittle-tattling and back-biting to conversation on art or music; still their mimetic faculty gives them a great advantage over men."

"It's perfectly heartrending to see how a man behaves when he comes into a little money. Always looking at his new boots and furtively eyeing his jewellery which, as a rule, is much too large. A girl whose hands have been roughened by labour, will get them white and soft in two months by keeping them in her glycerine gloves, but a man thinks if his clothes are all right his nails won't be noticed."

"I admit that many of my ladies, in trying to be natural, become only affected, but they know how to laugh. I just finished a lesson before you came. 'Laugh,' I said, and my pupil sniggered. More heartily please, and he produced a coarse loud guffaw, dreadful."

"When the lessons have been learnt, we dine in public to give them confidence, generally at some popular restaurant, and the pupil invites my three nephews, so that the conversation shall never flag. If it were not for the dining out, I should never be able to teach some of them to eat their food properly."

"I never advertise, relying exclusively on introductions. I have always fifty pupils in training, and more waiting, for it is well known that not only do I prepare people for Society, but guarantee them admittance if they are able to pay the price."

"The Horrors of Inexperience" are in the current HOME NOTES. You can obtain experiences of buying that little paper for 1d. weekly.

MAKING MONEY IN SPARE TIME.

POCKET MONEY FOR THE INDUSTRIOUS.

So many people have written us on that terribly thorny question of how to live, and so many ways of obtaining a livelihood have been suggested by various articles we have published on the subject, that P.W. has been making a few independent inquiries. Recently we lighted on an individual who delivered himself as follows:

"As I am leaving my present occupation I can afford to speak without reserve. The reasons which induced me to attempt gaining a livelihood as a buyer and seller, or what is known as a curio dealer were—first, the opportunity presented by journals like EXCHANGE AND MART for doing business; and secondly, that one afternoon, whilst idling away a few hours at Christie's, my attention was attracted by the keenness with which some old armour was being competed for.

"The buyers of the first three lots, with the exception of one little old gentleman—who, I was told, so venerated the good old days of yore that he lived in a house surrounded by a moat and crossed by a drawbridge—being all dealers, I concluded that there must be a market for old armour somewhere, so I determined to secure, if possible, the next lot.

"It was a suit of North Italian three-quarter steel armour. Quickly the bidding rose to 380 guineas, then it progressed by slow degrees to 415 guineas and then it stopped. Going for 415 guineas, going for the last time. As my entire capital did not exceed £500, I had ceased bidding long before, but as the hammer wavered I happened to look up.

"The auctioneer caught my eye, and evidently taking my look for one of those stealthy signs so common at Christie's, knocked me down the lot for 420 guineas. I was so dumfounded that before I recovered my self-possession, the next lot was well under weigh.

"What should I do? If I repudiated the transaction, the auctioneer might not accept any further bids from me. Had I given too much? Surely not. The lot would only cost me five guineas more than one of the dealers was prepared to pay. It was a risky thing, but I decided to chance it.

"Next day I tried to ascertain who the collectors of old armour were. I asked everyone I knew but could glean nothing of armour connoisseurs till I called at Wertheimer's, where, by passing myself off as a journalist, I ascertained that the late Edwin J. Brett, the publisher who made a large fortune out of boy's journals, had a rare collection, and was always buying.

"Like all rich enthusiasts Mr. Brett paid a good price, and I left his house with a cheque which gave me a profit of fifty per cent on my outlay. Now the moral of this transaction is that I, who knew no more of old armour than I do of Babylonian tablets, netted £220 odd, by simply buying something which good judges would have purchased if I had not.

"Shortly after, I secured several other good bargains in the same way. Learning that old snuff boxes were popular, I one day bought half-a-dozen at Christie's. I knew no more about them than a schoolboy, but although knock-outs are not tolerated at Christie's outsiders are run up, but by giving the fraternity to understand that unless they allowed me to have a few things I would run up all the lots. I was enabled to purchase some snuff-boxes, not at moderate figures—there were too many amateurs about for that—but at prices which put £40 in my pocket."

"After this you began to cultivate your natural instincts?" said P.W.

"Yes. It had long been a habit of mine to stop at old bookstalls and examine any books which were printed before the ordinary type came into use. Small books especially interested me.

"Once upon a time it was illegal to publish a book till a license had been secured. Consequently, when a work was being got ready which it was certain would not be licensed, the publisher made it as small as possible. Speaking generally, it may be said that second-hand booksellers, with the exception of a few well-known works, know next to nothing about old books.

"The prices are largely ruled by size and good preservation. The smaller the work the cheaper. I forget my first deal in books, but my second was an old black-lettered Bible. This I found in a box of books marked twopence each outside a shop in the Hampstead Road.

"I then went straight to the British Museum, and after two days' hunting, felt greatly elated on finding that our great library was without a copy. So were all the public libraries in London. £10 for a twopenny book seems a good price, but I might have got £50 if I had hawked the book about a little more.

"I acted even more precipitately in my next deal. I had secured after much haggling a number of little black letter books from one of the stalls in Farringdon Road.

"The owner of the stall must have had his suspicions, for he demanded a shilling each, which, considering the state of the bindings, was a bit high for the locality in question. But, as he fortunately knew nothing of Wycliffe, one of the first translators of the Bible, he first eyed me, then the books, noted their dilapidated condition, and let them go.

"They were indeed in such a parlous state, that even I felt dubious about finding a market, and was overjoyed when I sold them for £40. A little later I was not so pleased. One day I met the purchaser in the Strand.

"You remember those books you sold me," he said. "Come into Sotheby's and see what they fetch. There they are," he said.

"He had had them beautifully re-bound. "You'll see such a fight when they come on; the books have been well boomed in the Press."

"Lor", how fiercely the bibliomaniacs did glare at each other as the biddings slowly mounted. It was very annoying to see four books which I had sold for £40 knocked down for 260 guineas."

"Cannot a deal of information be obtained from the old catalogues of sales?"

"Yes. It is the custom of firms like Christie's, Sotheby's, etc., to send their sale copies to the British Museum. These catalogues not only contain the prices given, but the names of purchasers as well.

"A good living can be made out of china. Armed with Mrs. Palliser's work on marks, and careful only to buy specimens from potteries which have ceased to exist, the risks are greatly reduced. Still, the fabrication of old china has reached such perfection that the greatest caution is necessary. Only this season a well-known connoisseur gave £205 for a white Chelsea group of Hercules and Omphale. He subsequently discovered it to be a forgery.

"Chelsea is dreadfully dangerous just now. Last year one of the lots I bid for, twenty-four crimson and gold Chelsea plates, was knocked down for 420 guineas. I stopped bidding at 400 guineas. It was well I did, for they were forgeries.

"No, on the whole, old books, if rare, I strongly recommend as a safe investment of beginners. Forgers have been able to dupe some of the cutest judges in the world with fraudulent paintings and engravings, but the man who can imitate the yellow, faded look of paper in extreme old age has yet to be born. Besides, in buying books there are plenty of authorities you can consult free of cost.

"If ever I came across a book I thought worth buying, I would tell the dealer that I had left my purse at home, leave a shilling to bind the bargain, and then go to the British Museum and see how many copies there were in the catalogue; after which I would interview the principal librarian, and, this gentleman being as courteous as he is learned, I should be told all about the work, and have its value assessed to a penny.

"To P.W. readers out of employment, I say study Sotheby's old sale catalogues in the Museum, the yearly book on art sales, and when you have purchased anything don't be shy about calling on rich collectors. In starting, it is best to devote your energies to one particular class of work.

"The friend who advised me to try books, at the same time warning me off his preserve, dealt in works on sport. He knew nothing about this branch of literature when he started, but by sticking to sport alone he found in the course of a year or so that he knew more about sporting literature than anyone else. Not being a poor man, however, he was not obliged to sell quickly, and in a short time—three years or so—found that he had collected such a number of rare works at such ridiculously small prices that he determined to risk a little more in printing a catalogue.

"As all the principal books were fully described great interest was manifested in the sale by all the well-known lovers of sport to whom he sent them.

"Although the prices, in consequence of the sale coming just after the sale of another great collector of sporting books, were not a great success, he cleared over £500.

"One day I commenced rummaging the shops of marine-store dealers. As luck would have it, I came across an old processional bronze. My first thought was 'imitated.' My second, 'How did it come there?'

"Not a penny less than three shillings," said the dealer. "The copper's worth more than that."

"The Archdeacon I took it to nearly swooned when he saw it. After a deal of haggling he got it for £30.

"It is the most beautiful example of the fourteenth century workmanship I ever saw," he said, after the purchase.

"If he had said this before, I should have made him pay double.

"One word in conclusion. Strike out a line of your own, and don't depend too much on what others do."

Important Notice.

⊙wing to the advent of Christmas, the next issue of PEARSON'S WEEKLY—the Christmas Double Number—will be published on Thursday, December 22nd, instead of on Saturday, December 24th. The Double Christmas Number of SHORT STORIES will be ready on Tuesday, December 20th.

It Would Do For the Boy.

"WHY is it you sign your son's name to that article instead of your own?"

"Well, you see, it is intended for a magazine."

"What of that?"

"Why, when the magazine gets round to the point of printing it, I will be too old for it to be of any service to me, while my boy, who was deemed old enough yesterday to appear in trousers for the first time, ought to be just on the threshold of a literary career, where it may be of some help to him. To my mind where we are weak in literature is in not starting early enough. A man foolishly tries to make fame for himself instead of planning to pass the chance on to his children or his grandchildren, who might thus get some sort of a chance."

Care of the Eyes.

Don't read facing the light.

Don't read in the twilight or in badly-lighted rooms.

Don't hold the book nearer than is necessary for clear, sharp vision.

Don't think because you have good eyes that they will bear all kinds of abuse.

Don't make a practice of reading type too small to be seen readily at eight or ten inches.

Don't read while lying down. It causes an unusual strain on some of the external or directing muscles.

Don't attempt to read in a train or other jolting vehicles. It is a strain on the directing muscles of the eye.

Don't use the eyes continuously at close work without occasionally resting them by looking off in the distance.

Don't read when very sleepy, as the accommodation and convergence are naturally relaxed, and the extra effort necessary to force the unruly members to work may be shown by a congestion of the bloodvessels of the eyeball.

Indifferent as to the Kind.

HE was a fragile youth, and didn't dance all the dances.

"Let's sit it out," he said to his pretty partner.

"Where?" she asked.

"On the stairs."

So they went up a little way and sat down.

"Wh-why, what's the matter, Mr. Stackpole?" cried the fair young girl, for the young man had hastily risen and was gasping for breath. He could not reply. His face was livid. His eyes were rolled up, and with one shaking hand he clawed feebly at the skirts of his coat.

"What kind of attack is it?" she gasped.

At this question his voice came back to him.

"What difference does that make?" he harshly growled. Then, without a word of apology, he dashed up the stairs and flung himself into the men's coat-room.

And how was she to know that it was an ordinary carpet tack that the man who laid the staircarpets had carelessly left standing on its head.

Poisonous Garden Plants.

THE berries of the yew have killed many persons, and it is pretty well known nowadays that it is not safe to eat many peach or cherry kernels at once.

Among the garden plants commonly in vogue which possess a poisonous nature botanists mention the flowers of the jonquil, white hyacinth and snowdrop, the narcissus being also particularly deadly—so much so, indeed, that to chew a small scrap of one of the bulbs may result fatally, while the juice of the leaves is an emetic.

There is enough opium in red poppies to do mischief, and the autumn crocus, if the blossoms are chewed, causes illness.

The lobelias are all dangerous, their juice, if swallowed, producing giddiness, with pains in the head.

Lady's slipper poisons in the same manner as does poison ivy. The bulb seems to be the most harmful. Lilies of the valley are also as poisonous.

The leaves and flowers of the oleander are deadly, and the bark of the catalpa tree is very mischievous. The water dropwort, when not in flower, resembles celery, and is virulent.

LIKE OTHER MAJORITIES.—"You ought to go to work now; you have attained your majority," said Mr. G. O'Party to lazy son.

"Ya-as; but mine isn't a working majority."

"How are dice made?"

"I suppose they are cut out of bone or ivory."

"Then the old saying must be wrong."

"What old saying?"

"The die is cast."

If you want to keep up your end in conversation at this festive season, just buy the ATHLETIC RECORD (published every Wednesday) and read "What the World's Playing At" and "Smoke-room Small Talk."

How Do You Shake Hands?

HANDSHAKING is somewhat like kissing, being propelled greatly by mere force of habit. But unlike the latter, handshaking is a more valuable medium of salutation because by it you can, in a very great measure, gauge the strength of your friend's friendship if you have an observing mind.



"Well, well, well!"

Really of itself, handshaking affords very little interest to those as a rule who find a pleasure in it. Yet the subject itself is extremely interesting, and may be relied upon as a good standard for gauging the disposition. What is running through the minds of two friends when they meet and shake hands seems to be expended in the hand-grip.

Take, for instance, two sincere friends who have not seen each other for a long period. The handshake—with both hands generally—is cordial, firm, and hearty, indicative of the warmth of their friendship. They are so pleased at meeting that they feel a thorough disinclination to leave off their handshaking; their heartfelt pulsations seem to throb in their hand-grip.

There are, again, the two friends who see each other pretty frequently, yet to prove their sincerity cordially shake hands with all their might. These sort of good-natured people seem to imagine that the anachronisms of life may be lengthened, sweetened, and put in easy, thorough working order with the aid of a good-natured, honest hand-grip.

The style of the handshake now cultivated by Lord Allover and Lady Blankety-Blank is very chilling; it freezes, it shows the libellous side, as it were, of the genuine handshake, for it is surebarged with comments, which submit suggestions of a nature foreign to the healthy, generous, cordial handshake. It is an argument of friendship which you should stoutly refute.

The new Society mode of handshaking is not beneficial to the tone of good manners; perhaps it is graceful, but it leaves no good impression behind. It more often leaves contempt. Lady Blank's handshake is merely a bare statement of friendship without fact; so is Lord Allover's.

There is more meaning and depth of feeling in one "How's all the family?" sort of grip than in a hundred such as Lord Allover's, which is the typical handshake of the modern Society man. The former is the salutation of the hale-fellow-well-met mortal, who, clutching you by the hand, grips it like a vice, shaking it with a ponderous swing, pathetically inquiring at the same time about all your family belongings. You appreciate the warmth of the affectionate inquiry, but not the heat of the handshake, which almost doubles you in two. But don't complain; there is in that rousing handshake a fund of good humour, breadth of good fellowship, sincerity, cordiality, and truth.



"How's all the family?"

The "Can you lend me a sovereign till Saturday?" handshake is a subtle kind of touch; it is a cold loose, dangling grip which absolutely means nothing either in manners, methods or morals. The man

who assumes this kind of handshake may be reckoned up as being sly, cunning, artful and dangerous. His form of handshake bringing about an uncomfortable creepy feeling, there is no real friendship in it.



"Can you lend me a sovereign till Saturday?"

This particular type of hand-greeting is now struggling for a place in modern ethics, but I hardly think it will ever obtain in this country. Of course, the idea may be formed on the basis that, as the seat of life, according to the poets, is the heart, which is proven by the fact that married women wear their symbols of marriage on the third finger of the left hand, you should vote in favour of the new habit. But common usage will always respond to the friendly greeting of the right hand. Left hand shaking cannot by any means be called an admirable adjunct to friendship. This form of hand salutation publishes the fact that, while a fellow likes you, you are not to bother him too much with manifestations of your loyal friendship.

Again, the cultivation of the present-day left-hand handshake tends to prove to the observing mind that, as we are progressing towards a matter-of-fact period, the changing from the right to the left hand is obviously the sign that the day is not far distant when handshaking will be done away with altogether.

The "Howdodo?" handshake is a mean form of the habit. You are offered only two or three fingers, and then with a supercilious air that reduces the salutation to a fallacy, rendering the habit to a valuation next to nothing. This is the customary greeting of the proud, vain-glorious man who thinks great things of himself, a man who has got on in the world and lets everyone feel that he is of exceptional value to the human race regardless of what the world may think of him.



"Howdodo?"

Now, the "Wot cheer, 'Ria?" grip of the knight of Whitechapel, a gentleman who is not always supposed to have a vast amount of domestic feeling, is full of responsibility—a responsibility that appeals to the human heart—laden with the fruits of affection. I am

justified in saying that there is as much truth and good, honest feeling in the rough, unmannered, unmodelled, uncouth handshake of the coster as there is in the hand-greeting of any two people born in a higher state of life.



"By Jove, who'd have thought of seeing you?"

There are some who hold back from accepting the hand of a mere casual acquaintance whom you are bound to meet with occasionally, because they know nothing about the new would-be friend. Of course it is an unwritten law that one must exercise a certain amount of discretion in making friends, but little harm could be done in thus meeting with a man's wish, the fact of so doing characterising you as a gentleman. It acts as a sedative, a corrective, and alterative; in short, as a tonic to the health of the heart.

The coster who, in a moment of spontaneous affection, throws out his hand to you for you to take, feels as proud as an Attorney-General when his act of politeness is reciprocated.

There is a world of meaning in the "Good-bye" handshake. It is like a balance-sheet which shows you all the figures you want to see, and how you stand on the credit side of friendship. The account of departure shows all assets in your favour with a big balance to be brought forward again in your favour.

A farewell handshake "What cheer, 'Ria!" commands the presence of all the kindest feelings that can be brought to bear on the surface of the goodwill borne towards you at the moment of your leave-taking.

There is a class of people who do not affect the hand-shake at all, not because they are devoid of all those feelings that brighten the face of nature, but because they are, in a word, cranks. They are the people who go about in the fear of rubbing shoulders with any of the vast tribe of the bacilli, germs, microbes, and such things that infest creation, people who, for the most part, really believe that all disease is communicated by personal contact in any shape or form. They may be right, but it's not polite.

The handshake of the "acquitted" must prove a bounty fund to the acquitted prisoner, who, having undergone a severe ordeal, is invited to step from the dock a liberated man; and how thoroughly sincere must be the grip of his friends.

The "Haven't seen you for an age" method of handshake is of a type which is jolly, pronounced, frolicsome, and hearty. Its belongings are those of true friendship. The demonstrations may not always be refined—in some cases, indeed, manifestations of this form of friendship may be said, in a word, to be foolish, but it is not too much to bear in mind that they are thorough if not always reasonable.

To sum up handshaking in a few words you may class this form of greeting into two divisions—the positive and the negative. There is no misunderstanding the positive. The grip does not consist of the mere touching of the fingers, but its very essence lies in the firm grasp of the hand, denoting thoroughness, well-meaning, and hearty friendship.



Congratulations.

The negative kind is the reverse of this—nay, more; it must not be tolerated.

WHAT OUR BRAINS HAVE COST US.

ARE WE SUCH SUPERIOR ANIMALS AFTER ALL?

"It has long been an accepted axiom among scientific men that Nature is self-compensating," recently said a well-known scientist to P.W.

"For instance, if a man be deprived of one of his senses—such, for instance, as his sight—his remaining ones will all be perceptibly keener than they were when he was in possession of the normal number of faculties. The explanation is, of course, simple. As a result of his loss he is enabled to concentrate the same amount of energy upon four senses that he previously divided over five, with the very natural consequence that the four benefit at the expense of the one which has become defunct.

"Most of us are probably aware of this fact, either from hearsay or out of our actual experience. Few of us, however, realise that the exact converse of this state of things is constantly taking place in our own bodies—that, in fact, we are fast developing one set of our faculties to the total exclusion of the remainder.

"Heedless though we may be, however, it is nevertheless an indisputable fact that our sight, smell, taste—in short, all our finer primitive powers, are fast quitting us for ever. They are part of the price we are paying for that necessity of this *fin-de-siècle* period, the big brain. Year by year we relinquish, little by little, our power over them. So little, perhaps, that even in a lifetime we can scarcely mark the difference. But for all that, the difference exists; although in a highly-civilised community like our own it is, perhaps, hard to detect it.

"We have, however, but to go to the black aborigine of Australia, to the bushman of South Africa, or to any other of the wild tribes whose brain power is as yet comparatively undeveloped, to see in full working order the senses which had been bartered away in exchange for our superior civilisation. For, scoff at it as we may, there is no gainsaying the fact that our own blue-painted forefathers were very much upon an intellectual par with the modern Australian, and, like him, possessed the same acutely developed senses which are already practically lost to ourselves.

"Take, for example, our sense of taste. With the exception, perhaps, of professional tea or wine-tasters, there are scarcely any of us whose sense of taste can compare with that of the lower animals. Few of us, for instance, could detect a poison by its taste. Nevertheless, the monkey, with a brain immeasurably inferior to our own, cannot be induced to partake of a poisonous food.

"So dulled indeed are our once sensitive tongues and palates, that we can now slowly draw in the deadly nicotine for hours together without experiencing any serious discomfort. Place a drop of this same oil upon the tongue of a snake and, so highly developed are the nerves of its palate, that the shock of tasting the poison will immediately cause the reptile to become perfectly rigid. Indeed, it is the opinion of many old Anglo-Indians that the Hindoo snake-charmer avails himself of this peculiarity of the ophidian palate in the working of his charms. That, in fact, the charmer (who, by-the-way, invariably expectorates tobacco juice into the snake's mouth) commits this unpardonable breach of good manners more for the purpose of paralysing the nervous system of his writhing victim than from any desire to play to the gallery.

"Our sense of touch has retrograded to a similar extent. Few of us, nowadays, can detect the presence of an individual whom we can neither see, hear, nor actually touch with our fingers; although we may perhaps do so when one or more of our senses is temporarily dulled. For instance, most of us know what it is to go into a perfectly dark room, and, without using our eyes, ears, or hands, nevertheless feel a mysterious something in the air which tells us that we are not alone in the room. But we could not do this in the open air, whereas most primitive peoples, and certainly the majority of animals, are fully endowed with this faculty.

"A common bat, for instance, having been purposely, and very cruelly, blinded, was let loose in a room intersected by a multitude of crossed pieces of string. Notwithstanding that the cruel ordeal through which it had just passed might well have caused the demoralisation of its nervous centres, the poor creature was, nevertheless, fully capable of rapidly winging its way in and out of these intersecting obstacles without once brushing up against them in its terrified flight.

"In the sense of hearing the disparity between the so-called lower forms of life and ourselves is even more marked. A well-known professor of acoustics recently stated that although his inland home was situated more than eighty miles from Portsmouth, he was invariably informed of the firing of the nine o'clock evening gun by the sudden rustle amongst the pheasants in a plantation adjoining his habitation. The hearing of these birds, he believed, was agitated by a sound which at the best would scarcely be audible to a man standing at a quarter of the distance from the disturbance and, watch in hand, listening intently for the occurrence.

"The bushman can, however, still hear noises at a

great distance by means of the old expedient of placing his ear to the ground, and most savage and semi-savage nations have similar powers. In our own case it is undoubtedly a fact that we hear better with our mouths open than shut. Possibly this accounts for the number of open-mouthed individuals one is constantly meeting in the street. The former fact may be readily verified by stooping one's ears in the midst of a great noise—such, for instance, as occurs whilst passing through a railway tunnel—and alternately opening and shutting one's mouth. The increase in the volume of sound which occurs whilst the mouth is opened must be experienced to be appreciated.

"Our sense of smell is even less acute. It is impossible for us to scent a human being, provided he makes a reasonable use of soap and water, but everyone knows that most animals will recognise both friends and enemies by smell. Hunters of big game must always approach their quarry against the wind; whilst the wild black tribes of the Soudan can recognise the smell of water at many miles distance, and quite as readily as their own camels and oxen. The sense of smell in animals has recently been brought rather more prominently before the public by the man-hunting trials which have just been held in Yorkshire with bloodhounds.

"There is, however, one unfortunate class of human beings whose sense of smell will almost compare with these animals. Curious to relate, the few blind deaf-mutes who have recently come under medical observation have all been able to recognise and form fairly accurate opinions about the people around them solely by means of their olfactory organs.

"It is, however, in his sense of sight that civilised man compares most unfavourably with both savages and the lower animals. The musty tone, artificial light, the rush of the locomotive, and many other products of that ever-increasing brain of his, have all conspired to gradually despoil the nineteenth-century man of that keen, unflinching eye which is the most treasured gift of the lowest savage. Place your aboriginal Australian and civilised Englishman side by side on the open plain and mark the difference in their powers of vision. Of intellect, as we understand it, the former has practically none. Nevertheless from every blade of grass, every bent twig or displaced stone, he can read a world of lessons as to the presence of man and beasts, that are utterly lost on the other, if only from sheer want of the vision wherewith to see the necessary outward signs of the disturbance.

"It is, indeed, highly questionable whether this much-boasted brain of ours has not altogether absorbed that third eye which, like the fabulous Cyclops, we once possessed in the centre of our foreheads. This eye was common to all backboneed animals, including man, in whom it exists to the present day in the form of a curious little substance called the pineal gland. Its use as an organ of vision has, however, long since gone the same way, in which it would appear that our other fast dimming faculties are trending—to the swelling of that great brain of ours, which, unless we watch it, threatens to eventually swamp all our other faculties.

"What, then, has this big brain done for us? "It has lifted us above the brute creation, and has brought us wealth, palaces, purple and fine linen. It has shown us how to kill our fellow men by battalions instead of in dribbles of ones and twos; it has also given us Hooleyism. It has blessed us with the baked meats and fruits of all climes; but it has also provided us with livers. In short, wherever it has given, it has also taken away, and it seems, indeed, very questionable whether, taking one thing with another, our big-brained selves of to-day are one whit happier than our small-brained, but fully 'sensed,' ancestors of two thousand years ago."

FARMER: "Look here, my son, it is time to repair our mill. The artists are beginning to paint it."

WIGWAG: "How is Beetem getting along?"
Dr. Killem: "Well, he's doing nicely."
Wigwag: "Who's Nicely?"

BROWNSON: "Is your wife jealous of you?"
Dawson: "Jealous is no name for it. Why, on our wedding trip she wouldn't even let me admire the scenery."

It oft must strike the striker's mind,
Which ignorance doesn't thicken,
That in the end he's apt to find
Himself the one that's stricken.

"How's this? You're already advertising again a dog lost. That's the third dog you've lost in a month!"
"Oh, it's just my luck! Since my daughter has been taking singing lessons I can't keep an animal in the place!"

"But could you bring yourself to marry a woman who smoked cigarettes?" they asked the young man who had insisted that women had a right to smoke if they chose.

"No; I have enough people begging my cigarettes now."

How the Best Paid Applauder Died.

GERTNER, the great "claqueur," of Vienna, has just died of a broken heart. He saved up over £10,000 as the proceeds of his unique calling. He was for years the director of the claqué at the most popular theatre of Vienna, the Deutsches Volks Theater. Now a claqué is the prearranged applause which greets the "star" performers in a company, whether their performance is good or bad, and is started by paid shouters (or claqueurs) judiciously disposed among the audience. It is said that Gertner elevated his humble occupation to an art, and was in great demand by actors who wanted direct assistance from the auditorium. Gertner was the soul of discretion.

He came to the theatre night after night in different characters and costumes, and was never recognized as a claqueur by those round him. Sometimes he occupied a box, sometimes a seat in the stalls, sometimes he posted himself in the gallery, but always where he could indicate to his subordinates, by a code of signals previously arranged, how and when to applaud without attracting undue attention.

Gertner has been seen sitting in a box, for which he himself paid, in an elegant dress suit, with white tie and gloves, and looking so *distingué* that no one would have dreamed that he was a claqueur. When he raised his handkerchief to his nose, a round of applause followed; when he replaced the handkerchief in his pocket, the clapping gradually subsided.

Gertner came to grief in a curious way. He was sitting in the stalls at an important first night, and fell asleep during the play. A particularly tragic passage had been reached when Gertner suddenly awoke with a start, and commenced to applaud vigorously.

The house roared with laughter, and the piece was ruined. Gertner was dismissed in disgrace, and has died of a broken heart.

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Every week the Editor of PEARSON'S WEEKLY addresses Ten Envelopes to Ten People in various parts of the Country. Inside each envelope he places a £25 Note, and locks them away in his private safe. All you have to do is to apply to this office by letter, inclosing threepence in stamps, asking if one of these £25 Notes has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink. The names have been picked out at random from Directories and other sources, so it is just possible notes have been awarded to people who are not readers of this paper. No note will be given unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to apply also, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 21 Distribution must reach us by Saturday, December 24th, addressed to THE "NOTE" EDITOR, 21, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

In Short Stories this week will be found the names of those who have received £1 each and of those who would have received £1 had they applied. Are you one of the latter?

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 18.

Of the ten £5 notes offered to our readers this week, two have been applied for by:

DAVID O'NEILL,
Milton Barracks,
Gravesend.
H. COUSENS,
16 William Street,
Morice Town,
Devonport, Devon.

The following eight persons would each have received £5 had they not failed to apply for it:

F. BURKE, 2 James Street, Drogheda.
G. W. DAWK, 99 Plasheet Grove, East Ham.
JOHN ELVIN, 100 Uppate, Louth, Linco.
J. MANLEY, 168 Mill Street, Crewe.
G. PARKER, 118 Clarendon Road, W.
JOHN O. STEWART, 23 Church Street, Pembroke Dock.
A. STANLEY, 8 Burleigh Street, Walsall.
JOHN CUNNINGHAM, 47 Melville Street, Pollokshields, Glasgow.

Candied Walnuts, Preserved Violets, Caramels. No, we are not giving them away, but the current HOME NOTES contains the recipes.

LADY CHETSTONE'S PEARLS.

By JAM. DONALD.

"PERHAPS the secret of my success, as you are good enough to call it," remarked the eminent detective, Reginald Mortimer, as we sat in his cosy consulting room one evening, "lies in the fact that I never permit myself to form theories. Unless I have sufficient evidence to make an undoubted practical fact I never allow my imagination to construct a theory, no matter how plausible it may appear. In this manner I keep myself free from the traps and pitfalls into which a preconceived theory will at times lead you."

"A very good rule, but one which I am afraid very few people could follow," I replied. "Given two or more facts it seems the most natural thing in the world to attempt to piece them together."

"Certainly it is, and that is what must be done. But if you arrange beforehand how you are going to join them the odds are that you will make a mess of it. My system is to keep each link in the evidence separate until I have collected all that are to be found and then combine them, not to chain each link together as it is found."

"Well, however it is done, it would give me great pleasure to following the working of your system," I said.

"Ah, I see you have a slight touch of the amateur detective fever," replied Mortimer with a smile. "If anything turns up perhaps I may be able to gratify your desires, although I have no doubt the result will be disappointing, as most of my cases are prosaic enough in all conscience. Others again are more interesting. Do you remember the great diamond robbery in Hatton Garden, for which Robertson got twenty years? I had quite a series of adventures in bringing that man to book, and but for the fact of a slight flaw in one of the stones I would, probably, have been completely baffled."

"I remember the case to which you refer," I replied. "If I recollect aright some time after the trial evidence was brought forward showing that the man Robertson was entirely innocent of the crime, and he received a pardon from the Home Secretary."

Mortimer frowned slightly. "I believe some such awkward *contretemps* did occur," he remarked in a preoccupied manner. "In fact, I have a faint recollection that the Home Secretary inadvertently on my system in a manner which quite pained me. He was actually rude. It is really sad to think of the class of men who get into public office nowadays. Besides, even although Robertson did not actually commit the crime, the evidence was quite conclusive that at all events he ought to have done so, and I think the granting of a pardon was very bad taste. It was calculated to bring our profession into disrepute."

The subject was evidently a painful one to the detective, but I was spared the necessity of making any further remark by a knock at the door. A maid entered, and handed Mortimer a telegram which had just been delivered. Tearing open the envelope, he rapidly glanced at the message, and with a smile passed it across to me.

I took it from him, and read:
Lady Chetstone's pearls stolen. Come down at once and investigate.

Lady Chetstone's pearls stolen. Come down at once and investigate. CHETSTONE.
"You expressed a desire to follow my working of a case," remarked Mortimer as I handed him back the telegram. "Fate has been kind to you. If you really mean it I shall be pleased to take you as my assistant in this case."

"I shall be delighted," I replied. "But who is Lady Chetstone?"

"As you see, the telegram is from Hungerford. Sir Claude Chetstone is the largest landed proprietor in that locality. He is very wealthy, and has a large residence called Lovedale Manor. And now you know as much about him as I do. We shall go down there to-morrow by the first train."

Shortly after ten o'clock on the following morning Mortimer and I stood upon Hungerford platform, where we found a carriage waiting to convey us to Lovedale Manor. (Mortimer had wired from London giving the hour of our arrival.)

A drive of a couple of miles brought us to Lovedale Manor, a fine old English residence, beautifully situated in a wooded valley. At the door we were met by Sir Claude Chetstone himself, to whom we introduced ourselves, and who received us in a very hospitable manner; nor would he speak of the matter on which we had come until we had partaken of the refreshment ordered for us.

This pleasing duty over, however, he briefly recounted the particulars of the robbery.

"There is really very little to tell," he remarked. "My wife and I were at the county ball on the night of the robbery, and returned home about two o'clock. Proceeding to her dressing room, Lady Chetstone removed her necklace and placed it upon the table, intending to lock it in her jewel case. This, however, she omitted to do, and she quitted the room, leaving the necklace lying upon the table. In the morning it had disappeared. There is absolutely no clue as to what has become of it. That, I think, is all there is to tell."

Mortimer listened attentively to the baronet's story. "Is it possible for anyone to enter the room during the night without passing through Lady Chetstone's bedroom?" he inquired.

"It is quite possible," returned Sir Claude. "There are two doors—one opening into the bedroom, another into the corridor."

"Ah, indeed. Were any of the servants likely to be about after you came home?"

"So far as I am aware they had all gone to bed with the exception of the butler, who let us in, and Mdlle. Valerie, the French governess. I do not know why she was up so late, but I recollect that as I passed the drawing-room I heard her singing. I may tell you, however, that I should be very unwilling to suspect any of my servants of having any concern in the robbery."

"I trust you will not have to do so," replied Mortimer. "Meanwhile, I should like to examine the room in which the robbery was committed."

The dressing room was on the first floor of the house. It was a small but daintily furnished room. The table, which was placed close to the window, was littered with the usual array of chinaware with which ladies love to surround themselves. Near the edge lay a half-burnt match, which had evidently been carelessly thrown down by some person after lighting the gas. This match Mortimer at once picked up and examined carefully.

For myself, I must confess that beyond the match, and to me its value was of the slightest; I could see absolutely nothing from which to form the slightest idea as to the perpetrator of the robbery. My companion, however, examined the room thoroughly, using his pocket microscope to peer at things which appeared to me to have no connection with the matter in hand. In particular, he spent quite a time examining a large wardrobe which stood near the door—a curious, old-fashioned thing with a lot of polished brass-work about it.

"I presume nothing has been disturbed since the robbery was discovered?" he remarked when he had finished his examination of this piece of furniture.

"Nothing has been altered. No one has been allowed to enter the room since we discovered the robbery. I thought it better to leave everything as it was until you had seen it."

"That was right. And now, with your permission, I should like to examine the servants."

One by one the servants came up to the room in varying stages of indignation and fear.

Mortimer keenly cross-questioned each, asking a number of questions which seemed to me to be totally irrelevant, but to which he appeared to attach considerable importance. Among the last to appear was the maid who had charge of the dressing-room.

"It is your duty to keep this room in order, I understand?" said the detective, after a number of questions similar to those he had already put to the other servants.

"Yes, sir, it is," replied the girl.

"Can you tell me when you were last in it on the night of the robbery?"

"About twelve o'clock, sir."

"Ah, indeed. And pray, why were you here so late? I understand that in the ordinary course you would have no occasion to be here after ten, as Lady Chetstone makes it a special rule that when she is late no one is to wait up for her."

"Well, you see, sir, I knew her ladyship wouldn't be back till the morning, and as I had to go down to the village I put off doing the room till I got back."

"I understand. I think that will do. By-the-by, do you remember doing anything to this wardrobe?"

"Yes, sir. Her ladyship is very particular to have it kept clean and bright, and I polished it very carefully. It was the last thing I did before leaving the room."

Mdlle. Valerie was the next to enter the room, and I noticed that as she entered Mortimer glanced at her sharply. She entered in a somewhat haughty and defiant manner, and glanced at us in an indignant fashion.

"You are aware of the unpleasant occurrence which has happened," began Mortimer in his suavest tones. "I should be pleased to hear how you spent the night on which the robbery was committed—merely as a matter of form, of course," he added, as Mademoiselle's eyes flashed angrily.

"Monsieur, would you insult me by suspecting me of robbing my benefactress?"

"There is no question of suspecting anyone at present," replied the detective. "It is essential, however, that I should know the movements of everyone in the house. I understand you were in the drawing-room when her ladyship returned. When did you go to your own room?"

"I did not look at the time, but it would be about three o'clock."

"To reach your room you have to pass along this corridor. Did you notice if the door of this room was open or shut?"

"I do not know. But if it had been open I would have noticed it."

"Thank you—I do not think there is anything else I wish to ask you, and I again apologise for troubling you. There is one thing, however—what is your height?"

"Five feet nine inches," replied Mademoiselle wonderingly. "Why do you ask such a question?"

"Oh, merely for curiosity. Just my own height, you know," replied Mortimer, bowing politely as Mdlle. Valerie retired.

"I should like to be alone for a little," remarked Mortimer, when the examination of the servants was completed. "I have some thinking to do, and I find solitude is desirable. Afterwards I shall be pleased if you will accompany me to the post office, which I understand is about half a mile from here."

Taking the hint I went out into the garden and strolled about for a time. In about a hour I was joined by my companion, and together we proceeded to the post office.

"Well, have you formed an opinion?" I inquired. "For myself I must confess that the matter is still shrouded in total darkness."

"Didn't I tell you that I never form opinions," replied Mortimer smiling. "I am still only in the gathering stage."

I waited outside the post office while Mortimer went in and spoke to the postmaster. When he came out I noticed a peculiar smile of satisfaction on his face.

"Any more clues?" I remarked.

"Well, yes," he replied. "I venture to think that I have now reached the joining-together stage."

Reaching the Manor we were shown into the library, where we found Sir Claude seated with a troubled look on his face.

"I have just had an interview with Mdlle. Valerie," he explained. "She has given notice that she is resigning, and declares that she will leave the house to-day. She says she will not stay another day in a place where she is suspected of robbery."

"Indeed," replied Mortimer quietly. "Where is she now? Can I see her for a moment?"

"I shall ring and ask her to come here. I am very vexed that this should have happened, for my wife prizes her very highly, and will be extremely sorry to lose her."

In a few moments Mademoiselle entered the room, holding herself proudly and defiantly.

"Mdlle. Valerie," said Mortimer in his gentlest tone, "I understand that you are naturally indignant at being suspected of being implicated in the unfortunate robbery. Allow me to assure you that for my part I do not suspect you of being the perpetrator of it—I am perfectly certain of the fact."

The effect of the latter words was startling. Mademoiselle turned pale and would have fallen had I not caught her and assisted her to a couch. Sir Claude stared at the detective in an amazed manner.

"Is this really the case?" he asked after a painful silence. "I cannot believe it. Have you any proof of your statement?"

"I think I can claim to have ample proof. Of that, however, you can judge for yourself when you hear. I have not yet recovered the pearls, but expect to do so within a week."

"In the first place it is evident that the robbery must have taken place between the hours of three and ten a.m. As Mademoiselle herself acknowledges, she passed along the corridor after three o'clock."

"Secondly, you will recollect the burnt match which was found on the table. The room was cleaned at midnight by the maid, and the gas was left burning, and it was turned off by Lady Chetstone herself when retiring. Consequently, if anyone had occasion to enter the room between the hours of twelve and three there was no necessity to strike a match to obtain a light. It may be safely assumed, therefore, that the match was placed there after three o'clock. Further, I find that the match is of a peculiar make, and the housemaid is certain there is only one box of the kind in the house. That box was last left in the drawing-room. It has since been found in Mademoiselle's room!"

"Thirdly (kindly excuse the ministerial mode of expression) probably you observed the particular attention I paid to that old-fashioned wardrobe. It struck me that, standing as it does so near the door, a lady entering the room, especially in the dark, would be almost certain to brush against it. My close examination met with due reward. Adhering to the sharp edges of the ornamental brasswork I found several pieces of wool which, on examination through the microscope, I found to correspond exactly in colour and texture to the dress worn by Mademoiselle on the night in question."

"Fourthly (and I may say that I do not advance this as evidence, but simply as an additional confirmatory circumstance) it is a well known fact that a lady can never behold a looking-glass without succumbing to the temptation to look at herself in it. Lady Chetstone herself is not above this little weakness, for she confesses that on the night in question she did indulge in this essentially feminine trait. Now I examined the glass, which is a very small one, very carefully, and I found it to be placed at such an angle as to render it quite impossible for Lady Chetstone, who is rather under average height, to see herself in it. On the other hand, it was exactly suited for a person of Mademoiselle's height."

"Fifthly, from information received, I called at the post office this morning and find that on the day after the robbery Mademoiselle dispatched a box per parcel post addressed to M. Jules Valerie, in Paris. I have wired the postal officials in Paris to detain this box, and I think it will be found to contain the missing pearls."

There was a few moments silence when the detective finished. I felt amazed at the dexterity with which he had tracked the culprit; Sir Claude was evidently deeply grieved at hearing the condemning evidence against one he had trusted. Mademoiselle sat staring fixedly in front of her. She preserved her self-possession wonderfully, but in fact of the conclusive proof of her guilt she had naturally nothing to say.

We were still sitting in silence when there came a gentle knock to the door, and Lady Chetstone entered. In her hand she held a beautiful pearl necklace!

"The pearls!" exclaimed Sir Claude, bounding from his chair in amazement. "Wherever did you get them?"

"Oh, Claude, I have made a most ridiculous mistake. I feel so ashamed of myself to have caused all this fuss. The fact is, I found my necklace fastened to the dress I wore at the ball. I must have forgotten to unfasten it, and in the morning I was so certain I had left it on the table that I never thought of looking at the dress. I opened the wardrobe a few minutes ago, and you can imagine my joy at finding the pearls safe."

A bombshell seemed to have burst in our midst. We gazed at each other in almost ludicrous astonishment. Lady Chetstone, without a word being spoken, seemed intuitively to grasp the situation. Crossing to the couch on which Mademoiselle was still seated she sat down beside her and took her hand gently.

With an effort Mortimer recovered his composure. "Under the circumstances I presume you will not wish to pursue the case against Mdlle. Valerie any further," he inquired, turning to Sir Claude, "although, as I have shown you, it is a good case—a very good case."

"A decidedly bad case you've made of it, accusing an innocent girl with your trumped up falsehoods," burst forth the baronet wrathfully. "But, I beg your pardon, I suppose I ought not to blame you. Bloodhounds must find blood somehow or other. May I suggest, however, that as the matter is now settled there is now no longer any need for remaining here. Your account for services rendered will be promptly paid when presented." And Sir Claude, quivering with suppressed indignation, turned his back on us and crossed over towards his wife.

As we walked down towards the station Mortimer kicked the stones that lay in his path in a moody manner.

"At any rate you have found that a detective's life is not entirely a bed of roses," he muttered reflectively. "It was a beautiful case, too. If that meddlesome woman hadn't interfered I believe I could have secured a conviction on the evidence. But it is all my own fault. As I have already told you, a detective should never assume anything, and I started right away by assuming that a robbery had actually been committed."

A Town Wife Keeps a Cow.

FED HER ON SPONGE CAKES AND DECORATED HER FOR SHOW PURPOSES.

It was only after mature deliberation that Fish decided to tie up his money to the extent of a ten-pound note on a cow.

"Think of the good the fresh milk will do the baby," said Mrs. Fish.

Crumpstead told him he had a friend out in the country who had been looking for a cow purchaser for three weeks, and that if he wanted to go he (Crumpstead) would drive him (Fish) out to see it.

Mrs. Fish thought that would be well, after her husband had told her of his conversation with Crumpppy that evening. So the next morning Crumpstead and Fish went out into the country. It all ended by Fish deciding on the spot to take the animal, his decision hurried by the man's remark that she had been known to give twelve quarts of milk at a sitting.

Fish remembered that stable would be all right, so he told the man he would lead the cow home then and there. A cheque on the bank settled it, and the cow was led back to town by a long rope fastened at one end to her horns and at the other to the back of the carriage.

Mrs. Fish was standing on the porch, about six o'clock in the evening, when Fish turned into their avenue with the cow. She ran down the path to meet him, clapping her hands with real, unalloyed delight.

"Isn't he pretty?" said Mrs. Fish, as her fingers tightened round those of her husband.

"It isn't that," said Fish.

"Isn't what?"

"He isn't a 'he.'"

"What?"

"He isn't a gentleman cow," explained Fish. "He is a lady cow."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Fish.

Well, they put her in the stable that night, and Mrs. Fish, in lieu of anything else, fed her with a painful of sponge cakes that she had been making all day. Fish had made no provision for cow fodder.

He would milk her the next night.

Mrs. Fish spent all the next morning in town, shopping, leaving Min at home with the girl.

When she entered the house about two in the afternoon, she went out to the shed, and didn't come back into the house until nearly five o'clock, Fish's time of getting home.

"I've bought a stool for you," she said, when he finally came. "It's out in the stable now."

And Fish went out smilingly with a bright, new, six-gallon pail under his arm.

He opened the stable door. A soft low met his ears. In the dim light he beheld a sight that caused him to gasp.

There stood the cow. Round her tail was tied a great bow of baby blue satin ribbon six inches wide. Two bows of pink decorated her horns and the wisp at the end of her tail was braided and tied with ribbon of scarlet. Round her legs were other bows of different shades.

"Well I'll be hanged!" Fish exclaimed, with the addition, "that comes of marrying a town woman."

And he went back into the house, and later Mrs. Fish went up to her own room with red eyes and little Min wondered what it all meant. And now Fish has a cow for sale cheap, a cow that is of the feminine gender and that has been known to give twelve quarts of milk at a sitting.

The Power of Imagination.

THE fact that the throes of the imagination under great excitement often produce a corresponding physical frenzy was illustrated recently in the case of a man who had gone to sleep with his artificial teeth in his mouth. Waking suddenly with a choking sensation, he found his teeth had disappeared.

He looked in the glass of water where they were usually deposited, did not see them there, and realized that they must be far down his throat. Choking and struggling he hammered on the door of a friend sleeping in the house, who, seeing his critical condition, vainly endeavoured to draw the teeth out of the sufferer's throat.

He could feel the teeth, but had not the strength to extricate them. He ran for a blacksmith, who lived a few doors away, but the blacksmith's hand was too big to put into the man's mouth.

A doctor had been sent for, but he was so long in coming that the victim of the accident seemed likely to die of suffocation before the physician arrived.

A little girl of ten years was brought, under the impression that her small hand might reach the obstacle and withdraw it, but she got frightened and began to cry. The sufferer became black in the face, his throat swelled out, and his friends expected every moment to be his last, when finally the doctor arrived.

He heard the history of the case, saw that the teeth were not in the man's jaw nor in their nightly receptacle, felt the throat and chest of the sufferer, and cast his eyes seriously upon the floor. There he saw the whole set of teeth. He adjusted them in the jaws of the patient, told him to breathe freely, and every symptom of suffocation disappeared.

WOMEN ARE TAKING TO CIGARETTES.

THE HABIT IS SPREADING TO AN ALARMING EXTENT IN THIS COUNTRY.

SEEN and questioned by P.W., a prominent tobaccoist said recently: "The number of women smokers is undoubtedly increasing at a very rapid rate. A few years ago it was a rare thing for a woman to come inside my place and buy a packet of cigarettes. Now, a hour scarcely goes by without a woman or a girl dropping in and purchasing a supply. In fact the tobacco trade is catering for women as well as for men. Here," he went on to say, taking down a delicate little packet of a particular brand of cigarette, specially and daintily got up, "here is a thin cigarette, made of the best tobacco, intended for ladies. It is a favourite with three out of five women smokers. I have nearly as great a call for this as any other cigarette. It is not the only cigarette patronised by women; there are other makes. Of course, the brands are not so numerous as in men's tobaccos, but the trade has its business eye open and is watchful in the interests of its fair clients. Those women who are as yet too bashful to stand at the counter like a man and pick and choose their cigarettes generally depute a gentleman friend to act for them.

"What sort of women smoke? Well, there are two classes of women smokers, the Bohemian who has no qualms about smoking in the presence of other people, and the shy smoker who enjoys the society of Lady Nicotine when no one else is present. The latter is the more ardent disciple of the two, so far as quantity consumed is concerned. Classing them together, fair smokers are generally women of wealth, leisure, and position. Of course, you have your occasional girls of the lower strata of life who find delight in a clandestine puff.

"A great many well-to-do women have their cigarettes made to order, stamped with monograms and crests in a few instances. These ladies hardly ever order personally. They either write or get their husbands, brothers, or servants to order.

"What is the usual supply? Well, of course, women generally are not as great smokers as men; a hundred cigarettes will last them for about a fortnight. On the other hand, I supply a gentleman in your own walk of life who smokes on the average seventy a day. I should say that a woman smoker consumes about eight cigarettes a day. Usually they are made of fine Turkish tobacco, and, as you have seen, the cigarettes are not so long as a man's.

"What is the percentage of the increase? I should say that where five years ago I served one woman regularly I now serve twenty; that's the increase. I should not recommend American cigarettes to ladies, as usually there is about 50 per cent. of nicotine in American tobacco, whereas Turkish has only about 5. It is a curious fact that in Turkey, where the women are constant smokers, they live to a very great age. An anti-tobaccoist would find it a difficult matter to combat this statement.

"Owing to the soothing effect that tobacco has upon the nervous system it is a very rare thing for a smoker ever to lose his mind. My women customers find it a sedative, they say, and apparently it would seem to subdue what otherwise might prove a dictatorial temperament."

MISTRESS: "Did you manage that jam jar so that the flies could not get in?"

JANE: "Yes, mum. I took the handle off the cover."

CHICKERING: "Some of the new houses about here are so narrow that a piano cannot be put in."

BARB (excitedly): "You don't know the rent of the houses next door to them, do you?"

QUITE WILLING TO DO IT.—It was intended as a gentle hint.

"Our rule here," he said, "is pay as you go."

"Quite right," replied the other pleasantly, "but I am not going yet."

A BRIGHT DETECTIVE.—Inspector of Police: "Why didn't you report at eleven o'clock, as I told you to? It is after twelve now!"

Detective: "Confound it, sir, one of those pick-pockets I was shadowing has stolen my watch!"

CAREFUL OF HIS TROUSERS.—Miss Cashley: "You have dropped your handkerchief on the floor, Mr. Van Dudekin."

Van Dudekin (preparing to get on his knees): "I did it with a purpose, dear Miss Cashley—er—Edith, I love you; will you be my wife?"

"TIMMINS, do you know anything about literature?"

"No."

"Know anything about art?"

"Nothing."

"Know anything about music?"

"Not a rap."

"Good! Come over to my room, pick out a pipe and let's enjoy ourselves."

HESS?—Mr. Hoffman Howes: "I see some fellow has an article in the *Athenaeum*, entitled 'Have we Two Bwains or One?' What do you think of that question, Miss Fligh?"

Miss Fligh: "Well, really, between you and me I think we have only one."

AN UNREASONABLE CUSTOMER (in a shop where birds are stuffed).—"No, I am not at all satisfied. You stuffed my poor dear parrot scarcely a twelvemonth ago, and now all the feathers are coming off."

"Well, madam, you should give us credit for the faithful manner in which we imitate nature. What bird did you ever see, no matter of what clime, that did not moult once a year?"

RESULT OF FOOTBALL COMPETITION,
No. 14.

THIS week the £25 consolation prize has been won by

Mr. T. W. Gildersleeve,

46 H. wain Street,

Cathays, Cardiff,

whose attempt contained only one mistake.

Football Competition.

PRIZES OF £1,000, £100, £25.

THE Football Clubs named below play on Saturday, December 24th. To the reader who names the correct result of all these matches we will pay the sum of ONE HUNDRED POUNDS. In the event of two or more being correct the money will be divided.

If no competitor gives a quite correct solution TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS will be divided amongst those nearest. If between now and the close of the football season any one competitor wins the hundred pounds prize in full three times consecutively we will make him a further present of ONE THOUSAND POUNDS.

Football Coupon No. 17.

Matches to be played on Saturday, December 24th.

Cross out which you consider will be the losing clubs. For a draw don't cross out either.

1 Blackburn Rovers	2 Liverpool.
3 Wolverhampton Wanderers	4 Sheffield United.
5 Everton	6 Burnley.
7 Notts County	8 Aston Villa.
9 Rochdale	10 Wigan County.
11 Grimsby Town	12 Gainsborough Trinity.
13 New Brighton	14 Leicester Fosse.
15 Small Heath	16 Walsall.
17 Barnsley	18 Woolwich Arsenal.
19 Southampton	20 Swindon.
21 Derby County	22 Corinthians.
23 Clyde	24 Third Lanark.
25 Newport	26 Watsons.
27 Cardiff	28 Barbarians.
29 Leeds Parish Church	30 Bradford.
31 Swinton	32 Leigh.

Name.....
Address.....

CUT OUT COUPON AND POST TO US UNFOLDED.

In Pearson's Athletic Record published on Wednesday, December 21st, you will find the past performances of the above clubs dealt with, and their comparative chances in these matches fully discussed.

THINGS TO REMEMBER.

1. Coupons may be sent either from P.W. or the *Athletic Record*. In the latter paper will be found valuable hints as to which side is likely to win.
2. Nobody must enter for this competition who will not abide by the Editor's final decision.
3. All coupons must reach us not later than Saturday, December 24th first post. Any envelope bearing a postmark later than Friday, December 23rd, will be disqualified.
4. Competitors should cut out the above coupon, score it as directed, put their name and address in the space provided, and send to FOOTBALL No. 17, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C.

For the convenience of those who wish to make more than one attempt we have prepared separate coupons, which we will send by post to applicants at the rate of twenty for a shilling. Those who want them must send postal orders for as many sheets of twenty as they require, and must inclose a stamped addressed envelope. Coupons will be sent by return and are made available for any week. The sheets may be cut up and the coupons used singly if desired.

APPLICATIONS FOR COUPONS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO C. ARTHUR PEARSON LIMITED, HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

Some wonderful leaps have been made backwards, with ankles tied, and otherwise handicapped. You will find full particulars of the freak jumping in next Wednesday's *ATHLETIC RECORD*.

GEMS HAVE DISEASES.

SOME PRECIOUS STONES LOSE COLOUR, SOME GRADUALLY FADE AND DIE.

GEMS suffer from diseases just as men and women do, with this difference, that the infirmities of precious stones can rarely be cured. Some gems deteriorate—grow old, in other words—and gradually become lifeless.

Pearls are most subject to this fate, and no means have been found to restore them to life.

Among infirmities to which precious stones are liable is one common to all coloured stones, that of fading or losing colour when long exposed to the light.

The emerald, the sapphire, and the ruby suffer the least, their colours being as nearly permanent as colours can be, yet experiments made a few years ago in Paris and Berlin to determine the deterioration of coloured gems through exposure showed that even these suffered, a ruby which has lain for two years in a show window being perceptibly lighter in tint than its original mate, which was kept in the darkness.

The causes of the change are not very clear, even to expert chemists, but it is evident that the action of the light on the colouring matter of the gem effects a deterioration, slow but exceedingly sure.

In the case of the garnet and topaz the change is more rapid than in that of the ruby and sapphire, but there is a curious difference in the result in topaz and garnet, for while the latter grows lighter the former appears to become cloudy and dull in hue, losing much of the brightness characteristic of the newly cut gem.

For ages the opal has had the unenviable reputation of being the most unlucky of gems, and it is believed that the jewellers themselves were originally responsible for some of the superstitions and bad luck stories connected with it, since to the polishers and setters it is one of the most troublesome gems on their list.

Microtonists say that the prismatic colours and fire of the opal are due to myriads of minute cracks in the body of the stone, the edges of which reflect the light at different angles and give the hues so much admired. A stone full of cracks is liable to split in two at any time, and disasters of this kind, especially in the process of grinding and polishing, have occurred so often that every gem-polishing house has its store of hard luck stories in connection with the opal.

After the gem is set and sold, the load is taken off the mind of the manufacturer and transferred to that of the wearer.

Opals that have successfully passed the ordeals of grinding, polishing, and setting do not often crack afterwards, but it is best not to expose them to even the moderate heat involved by the wearer sitting in front of an open fire, for the opal is composed principally of silicic acid, with from 5 to 13 per cent. of water, a combination which renders them very treacherous objects.

The idea that they are otherwise unfortunate in the sense that they bring disaster to the wearer may be dismissed as superstitious. Of all the precious stones, however, the opal is the most open to disease.

Childers Gives Advice.

"You look worried, my dear," said Childers when he came home from the office the other day. "What is the matter?"

"The children been have very tiresome to-day," replied Mrs. Childers wearily. "It seemed as if they would make me distracted."

"Don't let 'em!" said Childers with considerable energy. "Don't let 'em ride over you. Just—Willie, don't talk when papa's talking—just deal with them gently, but firm—did you hear me, Willie?—firmly, and you'll get along all—silence, Willie, this instant!—all right. As for letting 'em worry—Dick! don't pull my pockets, I said—worry—will you take your hands out or not? Now keep them out. You've broken a couple of cigars for me now—you—what's Willie making such a noise about, Annie? Great Scott! he's got my silk hat. Take it—hang it up high. Now, Dick, if you cry, you'll have—now they've both commenced. It does seem, Annie, as if the minute I come into the house—I can't think—I can't think. Won't you take 'em off to bed? My gracious! I bet if I was at home, I'd—"

But as the boys clattered away upstairs with their tired mamma, Childers sat down and gazed gloomily into space, without saying just exactly what he would do if he was home.

PARALYSING.—"Isn't she a stunning-looking girl, though?"

"Yes; everything she does shocks me."

As down the wall the convict slid,
When he for freedom made a break,
He murmured, in the shadow hid:
"Excuse the liberty I take!"

CHALKERLEY: "Ah, sir, that dinner coat I built for you was an inspiration! I was en rapport with the subject when I made it. Imagined myself at dinner!"

CAUSTIQUE: "Yes, it fits me as though it was cut with a knife and fork."

STORIES OF THE ROAD.

INSURANCE AGENTS TELL SOME FUNNY TALES.

Left Her Feet Behind.

A WOMAN seeing the insurance agent coming had just time to tell her little girl to say she was not at home and conceal herself behind the clothes horse in front of the fire when he knocked at the door and walked in.

"Mother is not at home," said the child.

"Isn't she," said the agent. "All right, tell her when she comes back to take her feet with her next time she goes out."

One Way to Remember.

I AND another agent for the same Company call at a certain house. The daughter of the house could not remember our names and the books both being alike she frequently brought out the wrong one.

One day my book had a red ink splash on the back and the mother apologetically informed me that her daughter had done it to denote that it belonged to the agent with the red hair.

Wanted Something Quicker.

SOME few years ago I issued a policy on the life of a man who was far from being a model husband. I called for the premium every week and rarely got it without a grumble from the wife. The last time I called she said:

"I ain't going to pay you any more. There's Mrs. Smith only had her old man in M—'s society three months and he's dead and she's got the money. I'm going to put my old man in that so you needn't call again."

Misplaced Sympathy.

A WIDOW went to the office of the insurance company where her late husband had insured himself in order to receive payment of her claim.

During the conversation which ensued, the clerk remarked sympathetically that he "was very sorry to hear of her husband's death."

Whereupon she fairly staggered him by remarking: "You men are all the same—always sorry when a poor woman gets the chance of a little money."

Conscientious!

HAVE called for upwards of ten years, every week, upon a lady for the premiums on the life of her husband. About a year back he died and I went to pay her the amount of the claim, about £20.

Now came the strange part, she refused to take the money, saying that she had been paying only on her own life.

Though I must have called there at least 520 times she had not discovered that it was her husband's name on both Policy and Premium Book.

They Did Themselves.

A QUAKER was negotiating with an insurance agent as to effecting a policy on a vessel overdue. At this juncture he heard of the vessel's loss, and wrote at once to the agent of the company:

"Friend, if thee hasn't filled up the policy thee needn't, for I've heard of the ship."

"Eh," said the officers, "cunning fellow, he wants to do us out of the premium." So they wrote to the Quaker:

"Thou art too late by half-an-hour. Thy policy is filled up."

They Didn't Live There.

IN a small fishing village in the north of Scotland, a woman insured herself and family, but subsequently repented. The agent called again and again, but the door was always locked.

One day, however, he caught sight of a face at the window and determined not to leave until he had got some satisfaction. He knocked repeatedly, but got no reply. He did not go, however, but tried again; and was at last rewarded by hearing a voice from inside, saying:

"We're nae in, an' supposin' we wis, we dinna bide here."

A Baby Confederate.

I COLLECTED from a member who paid me sixpence per week. When handing me the premium book she generally put the coin on the table. After receipting the book I took up the money and left. But on two or three occasions when going to pick up the money, I found it was not there (although I saw her put it down) and when asked for it she would reply: "Oh! you picked it up," but rather than have unpleasantness, I gave in, making up my mind that in future I would watch her closely.

About the third week from this she tried the same thing again, and I found that when she put the coin on the table, she placed the baby (which she generally had in her arms) on the coin, and when she took up the child the coin went with it, i.e., the coin adhering to the child's body. When asked for the money she again replied that I had picked it up, but on this occasion I was enabled to tell her where she could find the money. I need not say she profusely apologized.

DO YOU INSPIRE CONFIDENCE?

THIS IS ESSENTIAL IF YOU WISH TO SUCCEED.

To inspire confidence is one of the most desirable attributes that one could possess. Without it, it is difficult to conceive how you could get on at all. You must have it in business; you must have it in friendship. Pity the man who fails to inspire confidence nowadays.

But what is this inspiring of confidence? Well, it is something that you cannot buy; you can acquire it without purchase. Just as the polish on the blade of your penknife is part of the steel yet not of it, so it is with this most useful of all human qualities which although you may dispense it outwardly through the channel of your manners, still, it is not the result of breeding, or the effect of good manners, for you may have a winning and a pleasing style with you, yet fail to inspire confidence. Nice ways may tend in that direction.

To inspire confidence is the act of influencing the good opinion of your employer, or your friends.

To succeed in life you must invite people to have faith in you, that is to say, confidence, and if you fail in this you fail in all. It is not because you are what is called close or mean, or you keep yourself aloof from the society of your fellow-creatures, that people generate a feeling about you that leads to their having no trust or confidence in you. It is not that. You may be esteemed by men of understanding and considered in every respect—save the one—a very smart man of business, but unless you have inspired or can inspire confidence, their opinion of you as a reliable individual does not obtain. While praising you, they run away from you; while sounding your virtues, they turn their head in the opposite direction.

For your friend, or, more important still, your employer, to believe in you and trust you implicitly, is a grand achievement. It is the certificate of your capacity, the coupon of your aptitude, is the holding of the good opinion of your superiors.

It is, then, of the highest importance that we should cultivate that best of all personal qualities—the gift of inspiring confidence. The obliging young lady who sells her ribbons and laces behind the counter wants it; the man who calls on you to book an order or to "show you the latest thing in his line" requires it; it is an indispensable quantity in all walks of life, from the doctor to the light porter, from the judge to the coster.

If you haven't it, how can you get it? Do what you are set to do with a will. There's no such word as "fail" to the man of capacity. Take up your instructions to go and do or find a certain thing with a good will and a determination to come back successful. When your employer sets you to perform what on the face of it looks like an almost impossible thing to do, go about it easily as if the thing were already done, for there is nothing impossible, to speak by the card; there is a way out of every difficulty. It is surprising what you can do when you throw your heart into your work. This is the way to inspire confidence.

The Natural Habits of Cattle.

It is easy to see that cattle are at home in a moist and flooded country. The wild cattle of Texas and Australia never from choice stray far from the floods. Out on the western ranches there are, of course, few trees, and the beasts thrive fairly well; but for all that, the conditions of their life are artificial, and are not such as they would select if free to choose their own dwelling place. All cattle love to stand knee-deep in water and under the shadow of trees. Their heads are carried low, even when they are startled, so that they can see under the spreading branches of the forest.

Compare the habitual position of the head of a cow with that of the head of the horse, or guanaco, which live in the open, and have to watch the horizon for the approach of enemies.

Then the split hoofs of the cattle are wonderfully adapted for progress over soft ground. In galloping through bogs or deep mud an ox or a buffalo will easily distance a swift horse. Their toes spread wide, and so they do not sink in so far as the solid-hoofed animal.

What is even more important, the open cleft between the toes allows the air to enter the hole in the mud as the foot is withdrawn, whereas a horse's hoof sticks like a "sucker," owing to the partial vacuum below it, and can only be dragged out by great muscular effort. Mounted hunters have been overtaken and killed by buffalo—African and Indian—owing to this fact.

BILL COLE: "Say, old boy, those typewritten letters of yours are full of errors—n's used for u's, l's for t's, and pound signs for L's."

Jack Wood: "Ah! But you should see her t's."

SO CONSIDERATE.—Husband (newly married): "Don't you think, love, if I were to smoke, it would spoil the curtains?"

Wife: "Ah! you are really the most unselfish and thoughtful husband to be found anywhere; certainly it would."

Husband: "Well, then, take the curtains down."

Competition is keen, and you should be keen on competitions when they're as interesting as those in the current HOME NOTES.

BORN OF BUSY BRAINS.

A FRENCH watchmaker has made a microscopic repeating watch that weighs a little over sixty grains. He intends to exhibit it at the great World's Fair of 1900, after which it will be for sale for £150.

AN illuminating cane is among the latest novelties. Gas is stored in it under pressure, and the head of the cane contains a burner. When you require to light up, you turn the head until two slots are in position, when the gas flows ready for lighting.

MAPS and plans of various towns on a novel principle are being placed upon the market. They are on tinned steel plates, are made to scale, and all the natural indentations and elevations of the ground are fully shown by enamel of different colours.

A NEW way in shaving, by which the razor will be abolished, has the support of a company, which intends to commence business shortly in New Jersey. Instead of covering the face with lather, the barber will daub it with a new preparation that will remove the bristles.

AN ingenious method of restoring the illuminating power of gas mantles will be of use to those who have adopted the incandescent system. It was discovered by a French scientist, and consists in simply "blowing out" the mantle from the inside while burning, which can be accomplished by means of a glass or paper tube.

AN improved toasting-fork has been invented by Mr. Monk, of 15 Dover Street, New Swindon. He claims that with his fork the slice of bread or other article of food can be held to the fire at any angle, and that both sides can be toasted without the trouble of taking off and turning, which is such a disadvantage with the usual kind of toasting-fork.

"You put a small bar of steel into a machine at one end, and the bar comes out at the other end in the form of a knife, handle and all." That is the terse description given of a new method being introduced by a Sheffield for the manufacture of cutlery. Hydraulic pressure is used, and the article is turned out complete, and ready for grinding and polishing.

THE diamond saw which is being used to cut the hard stone for the Paris Exhibition buildings was designed by a French engineer. It is a steel disc like that of the ordinary circular saw, but the teeth are formed of diamonds. The diameter of this saw is six feet, and the cutting edge has two hundred diamonds in it. The latter are ordinary crystals worth about ten shillings a carat. The speed of the saw is three hundred revolutions a minute.

To supersede the trouser button is the object of Mr. J. Coleman, of Birmingham. Instead of a button, he sews on the trousers tabs of stout material, each with a ring; the suspenders are to be provided with hooks to be hooked to these rings—and exit the button. It is contended that this arrangement is far more convenient and comfortable than the button, and that the tabs would not offend the wearer of the nether garments by coming off at awkward times.

SOME people manage to keep their pockets closed tightly enough without mechanical assistance, especially when subscription-lists and similar things are going the rounds; but for the ordinary person who is afraid of having his pocket-picked, a pocket-closer may be useful. The latest device of the kind consists of a piece of spring steel, arranged in the lining against the leg, and bent outwards, so that it presses one side of the pocket against the other, and keeps the mouth tightly closed.

A NEW method of lighting miners' lamps in the mines has been invented. Several short wax matches are arranged in position on a barrel, similar to that of a revolver, inside the lamp. As the barrel is turned, the head of the first match is rubbed over the surface of a rasp or file, which ignites it, the match being carried to the wick by the turning of the barrel. The wick lights, and the match soon burns out. When another light is required, a turn of the barrel—which is actuated from outside the lamp—brings the next match into line.

AN "electric match" is the name given by the Unique Manufacturing Company, 12 Ship Hill, Rotherham, to a pipe or gas lighter which they are introducing. It is a metal tube about four inches long, in the interior of which are two strips of paper. One of these strips is dotted with percussion caps, and the other is made of inflammable material. By sharply snapping the end of the tube a cap is fired and this in turn ignites the second strip, which is perforated to prevent it burning too far. It will burn long enough to light a pipe, and, of course, the process can be repeated. Papers of refills are sold cheaply.

AN exceedingly clever Japanese workman of Tokio has carved a figure in wood that is so like himself that, when the two are placed side by side, it is impossible to tell, at a distance of a few yards, which is the living figure. Every vein and wrinkle in his own body has been reproduced. The figure is made up of 2,000 pieces of wood, dovetailed and jointed so perfectly that not a seam can be seen. Tiny holes were drilled for the hairs, and the figure has glass eyes, and eyelashes so well made that they exactly resemble the workman's. Art connoisseurs declare that it is the most perfect model ever produced.

An Empire of Savages.

THERE now remains only one people and one little valley south of the Equator whose sovereignty has not been claimed by some European power. It is the Valley of Barotse, fifty or sixty miles wide, north of Lualaba, in South Africa.

And the only reason why the Marotse, who inhabit it, have preserved their independence is that England and Portugal both claim it, and therefore the work of "civilisation" is at a standstill.

It may not be so easy to conquer the Marotse when the time comes, for they are a tall, well-set-up race, albeit very black in skin. In manners they are courteous, and in bearing dignified.

Every full-blooded Marotse is by birthright a chief, and takes his place in the aristocracy of the empire.

The bare fact that he is a Marotse insures the respect of the subservient tribes, and as he grows to manhood, a sense of superiority usually implants in the native the dignity of self-respect.

Praise Your Wife.

"How do I look?" asked a young wife, who stood before her husband dressed to attend a party with him. He raised his eyes from the paper he was reading, looked at her critically, and said:

"All right. You'll do." Her heart sunk and her lips quivered, but he did not know it. She was conscious of looking her best, and she wanted a word of praise, of admiration, from her husband, and she failed to receive it.

Why was he so grudging of his praise? Ask the average man who answers his wife in that way when she asks his opinion, as he invariably does, and he will tell you that she always looks well, dressed in good taste and above criticism. But why doesn't he say that to her, or, rather, why does he not make a little lover-like speech for such an occasion? Even the courteous remarks he would bestow on the costume of an ordinary acquaintance are withheld from his own wife.

"Oh!" said a disappointed woman, "I would like to be a man just to show what a good husband I could be."

Bonfires in the Water.

HOW THEY ARE MADE ON SOME ICY LAKES IN AMERICA.

WHERE ice fields can be burnt fuel is hardly to be called expensive. A writer calls attention to the fact that on the ice-covered surface of a Kansas lake it is possible to have bonfires by simply breaking through the ice and applying a match to the surface of the water. The flames shoot up as high as a man's head, and will burn brightly for a minute or two, making the lake look as if the ice were on fire.

For several winters it has been possible to have such bonfires on Doniphan lake, Kansas, and on one of its tributary streams. The fuel for these fires is natural gas. It bubbles up through the water the year round, but it is only during very cold nights that it is temporarily stored under the ice in large bubbles or pockets, sometimes ten or twenty square yards in extent.

When these pockets are punctured with a chisel and a lighted match is applied, the experimenter is rewarded by a roaring flame, before which he may warm his numbed fingers. He who would try the experiment, however, must be careful to stand between the wind and the jet of gas as he lights it, or he will have his clothing singed before he can get out of the way.

There are places where the gas supply is so abundant as to prevent the ice from forming, except on the very coldest nights. When such places are frozen over they remain covered only a few days, for the gas, coming from a considerable depth in the earth, is so warm that it soon melts a passage through the ice and escapes. Last winter ice fifteen inches thick formed on the lake, and yet some of the areas of gas supply were not frozen over.

Near the spot where one of the creeks enters the lake the water is shallow, and the bottom may easily be seen. Here the gas has formed regular channels up through the mud, and out of these large bubbles of gas are discharged every few seconds. Doniphan lake is located about four miles north of Atchison, Kansas.

"I WANT a pair of shoes," he said as he stepped into one of the big shops.

"What number?" asked the polite salesman.

"Two, of course," was the indignant answer. "Does my appearance justify the conclusion that I'm a centipede?"

REAL ENJOYMENT.—"Don't you enjoy the grey days of December?" asked the poetic girl; "the days when Nature tempers the luxuriant joy with changeable moods of sadness?"

"I should say I do!" exclaimed the young man with a blue and red vest. "These grey days of December are what I've been waiting for. I'm advertising a cough medicine that ought to make my fortune."

"WHAT a beautiful baby! So pink and white!"

Said the caller. I dared not tell her

That I'd learnt from many a sleepless night

He was also a little yellor.

"JUST see that trombone-player; his face is red as a beet from blowing hard."

"Yes; he certainly ought to know what is meant by strains of music."

HE FINDS THEM, TOO.—"Jaysmith is a regular antiquarian. He has been married three times, and each time to a widow."

"How does that show him to be an antiquarian?"

"Well, he's a relict-hunter."

ALICE: "I heard a very pretty compliment for you to-day."

George: "What was it?"

Alice: "Mr Thurston, the jeweller, said you were one of the best judges of diamonds in this city."

George: "May I buy a nice solitaire for the third finger of your left hand?"

Alice: "Oh, George! what made you think of such a thing? Well, if you want to."

"PEARSON'S WEEKLY" INSURANCE COUPON.

The signing of this coupon by the purchaser will be sufficient to entitle him or her next-of-kin or legal representative to the benefits of the £1,000 Railway Insurance and the Football and Cycling Insurance, provided the conditions of the insurance coupon have been fulfilled.

Signature.....

Available from 5 p.m., Friday, Dec. 16th, 1898, until mid-night, Saturday, Dec. 24th, 1898. For full particulars see below.

"Pearson's Weekly" Railway, Football, and Cycling Insurance.

474 INSURANCE CLAIMS HAVE BEEN PAID

(Including one of a Thousand Pounds.)

This Insurance holds good for any number of claims to the extent of £1000—not for one only.

£1000 Specially Guaranteed

BY THE

OCEAN ACCIDENT AND GUARANTEE CORPORATION LIMITED.

40, 42, and 44, MOORGATE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

(To whom Notice of Claims, under the following conditions, must be sent within seven days to the above address.)

INSURANCE TICKET, applicable to passenger trains in Great Britain and Ireland.

Issued under Section 33 of the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Company, Limited, Act, 1890.

ONE THOUSAND POUNDS

will be paid by the above Corporation to the legal representative of any person killed by an accident to the train in which the deceased was an ordinary ticket-bearing passenger (including holders of season and excursion tickets, and post-office officials in any of the railway sorting vans, and railway servants travelling with pass or railway servants' tickets in an ordinary carriage), and who, at the time of such accident, had in his, or her, possession, the Insurance Coupon above, or the paper in which it is, with his, or her, usual signature, written in ink or pencil on the space provided at the foot. This paper may be left at his, or her, place of abode, so long as the coupon is signed.

PROVIDED ALSO, that the said sum will be paid to the legal representative of such person injured should death result from such accident within three calendar months thereafter, and that notice of the accident be given within three days of its occurrence.

One Hundred Pounds will be paid to whomsoever the Editor of Pearson's Weekly may decide to be Next-of-kin of any cyclist or football player who meets his death by an accident while actually riding a cycle or playing football, provided that deceased, at the time of such accident, had in his, or her, possession, the Insurance Coupon to be found above, or the paper in which it is, with his, or her, usual signature, written in ink or pencil on the space provided at the foot, and that death occurred within twenty-four hours thereafter, and that notice was given of such accident to the said Corporation at above address, within three days of its occurrence.

The above conditions are the essence of the contract. This Insurance holds good for the current week of issue only, and entitles the holder to the benefit of, and is subject to, the conditions of the "Ocean Accident and Guarantee Company, Limited, Act," 1890, Risks No. 2 and 3.

The Purchase of this publication is admitted to be the payment of a Premium under Sec. 34 of the Act. A Print of the Act can be seen at the office of this Journal, or of the said Corporation. No person can recover on more than one Coupon Ticket of this paper in respect of the same risk.

W.E. Subscribers who have duly paid a twelve months' subscription for PEARSON'S WEEKLY in advance to their newsagent, or to the publisher, need not, during the period covered by their subscription, sign the coupon, or carry the paper on their person. It is only necessary to forward the newsagent's receipt to the publisher of the paper, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and a certificate will be sent in exchange.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the premium in respect of PEARSON'S WEEKLY £1,000 RAILWAY INSURANCE and one of the FOOTBALL and CYCLING INSURANCES, has been paid on December 31st, 1898, and that therefore every purchaser of PEARSON'S WEEKLY is insured with the Company against Fatal Railway Accident to the extent of ONE THOUSAND POUNDS, and against Fatal Cycling and Football Accident, under the conditions named in the notice above.

General Manager for the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation Ltd.

Rich. S. Faull

"P.W." Christmas Double Number (2d.) will be on sale on Thursday next. It will be crammed from cover to cover with bright illustrated stories and articles. See that you get it.

Fun with "Dutch Tears."

A LITTLE EXPERIMENT WHICH ALMOST ANYONE CAN PERFORM.

"It is a great wonder," said an old chemist in his laboratory the other day, "why more boys do not take chemical experiments as an amusement. Why, I can do things with the common materials of everyday life, which really seem to be more magical to the uninitiated than any of the wonders performed by magicians of the public stage."

"Now, there are those curious little bubbles of glass known variously as 'Prince Rupert's Drops' and as 'Dutch Tears.' Apparently they are merely little globules of glass with elongated tails, made by heating a small glass rod in a flame, and allowing the molten drops to fall into water. After they have cooled you may pound the thick part with a hammer or mallet, yet you cannot break them."

"On the other hand, if you break a little piece off their tails, or touch any part of them with a quartz crystal, they will immediately disappear into the surrounding atmosphere. To the person who does not know the reason the performance is most astonishing."

"And yet it is all very simple. It is due to what is known as surface cohesion. Glass, when heated to a molten state, has naturally reached a very high temperature, and when the drops of melted glass are allowed to fall into the cold water, the sudden change produces a stress all over the surface of the drop which is really terrific. This stress, however, must be considered as a whole."

"It is very strong when taken all together, but it is exactly as though a piece of very thin rubber was stretched over the surface of the glass. If you punctured the rubber its haste to resume its normal condition would pull it off the glass."

"So when you break off the tail of the drop or cut through the film of very hard glass with a crystal, its endeavours suddenly to resume its normal condition result in its own destruction, and it breaks up into particles, which are really finer than the finest sand."

"It seems like a wonderful performance, but it is no more wonderful performance than many others which any youngster could perform if he would study even the simplest forms of chemical action."

"GIVE me the man who sings at his work," says some gushful writer. Do; give him to anybody who wants him.

"YES," remarked Mrs. Tacum, "before we were married I used to admire John because I thought he was so noble. I continue to admire him now, but it is because he is such a splendid humbug."

THE GOOD MAN: "What have you ever done to make the world a brighter place?"

Labour Leader: "I've done a good deal. Organised more'n twenty metal-polishers' unions durin' last year."

MRS. ENPECK: "Ah, well! Things are never so bad but they might be worse."

Mr. Enpeck (in whom the lion has suddenly been aroused): "I know it. I might be a Mormon and have three or four of you."

"I TRUST," she said patronisingly, "that you are a true artist—that you confine your efforts to an elevated plane."

"Assuredly I do, madam," was the reply. "I am a freacoer, and invariably work with a ladder."

Result of the "Cover" Competition.

Mrs. L. INGHAM, 28 The Crescent, Hipperholme, near Halifax, is the winner of the first prize offered in this competition, and we are, therefore, forwarding her the solid silver pencil-case. A copy of "The Impudent Comedian," by Mr. Frankfort Moore, has been sent to each of the following:

Miss M. Mills, 121 Ladywood Road, Birmingham; L. Cole, 54 Bilton Street, Teignmouth; L. Lamb, 27 Barritt Street, Middlesbrough; D. D. Browning, 7 Blythwood Drive, Paisley; R. Thomson, c/o Turner and Co., 103 Lothian Road, Edinburgh; Miss F. Taylor, 12 Dalberg Road, Brixton, S.W.; Chas. A. Russell, 2 York Buildings, Edinburgh; M. Scholey, 1 A Lums Row, Walsall; J. W. Bell, Steam Laundry, Fulwood Burdock, Preston; E. Gingell, Fenton Villa, Ilkington Road, Southville; T. H. Robinson, Corkeath Schools, Linton, Maidstone; C. Corner, 11 Cedar Road, off Chiswick Road, Newport, Mon.; F. Grant, 16 Livermore Road, Dalston, N.E.; H. Brown, 17 Seyssel Street, Isle of Dogs, Poplar, E.; Miss L. Wagner, 9 Winifrid Road, Earlsfield, S.W.; W. Hutchinson, 150 Kings Street, Aberdeen, N.B.; Miss Hollowell, Fulbrook, Burford, Oxon; Mrs. Cornforth Pearson, Brompton, Northallerton; W. Braithwaite, Welkroft House, Kendal; T. E. Morris, 6 Paston Place, Kemp Town, Brighton; Thos. Melvin, c/o Jas. Kennedy, New Inn, Ballina, County Mayo; E. Williams, 161 Mortimer Road, Kenal Rise, W.; E. P. Wilcock, Hope Vicarage, Pendleton; W. H. Smith, 64 Cheriton Road, Folkestone; Mrs. Castle, 6 Strathmore Road, West Croydon.

The Youngest King on Earth.

HE WAS BORN SO, POOR LITTLE CHAP.

SINCE his birth, King Alfonso XIII. of Spain, has been carefully guarded and reared. His education was, for a time, pushed too rapidly, and the lad was feeble and puny. Besides the usual studies he had to learn French, German, English, and Italian, and had studied Greek and Latin.

Then it was decided that he should take a partial respite from his studies, and devote himself more to outdoor sports. The change was of great benefit, and the frail, delicate child has developed into a stout, rugged boy. He is thoughtful beyond his years, and is thoroughly alive to the dignities and responsibilities of his position.

The boy, who will become King and be known as Alfonso XIII. after he is sixteen years old, is tall and slim, with curly hair, fair skin, a prominent forehead, and a serious expression.

While his mother, the Queen Regent, has charge of him, he is under the control of a military governor, General Sanchez, and has a household establishment of his own. His favourite mount is a small pony, bred in the royal stables at Aranjuez.

The case of Alfonso XIII. has no parallel in recent history. He was born a King, and has been one all of his life.

From the day of his birth the entire nation has been interested in him, and his death would have materially altered the future of Spain. He has been more carefully guarded and educated, perhaps, than any other boy now living.

Ever since he has been old enough to look about he has shown great interest in military matters. At four years of age he insisted on standing at the window to watch the change of guards, though he had been ill and was still far from well. When the uniformed men passed he gravely saluted.

On reaching the age of ten he was given his first uniform, that of a pupil in the Infantry Training School, and no boy was ever prouder of stripes than he. Every advantage has been given to him, and he appears to have profited by them.

At San Sebastian, where he spent last summer, a boy regiment of 700 members was organised and placed under the young ruler's command. He was very proud of his position and of his uniform, and he took great delight in drilling with his youthful charges.

The Liver: A Filter. A Sugar Factory. A Purgative Promoter.

The Liver is a wonderful organ.

The Man or Woman who does not know he or she has a Liver is happy indeed.

The Blood collects on its numerous journeys to and from the Heart waste matter and debris from all over the Body.

Like all waste matter, this would decompose and decay and breed poison if let alone, so the Liver comes to the rescue and strains these Biliary poisons from the Blood.

The Liver also puts the final touches to the production of grape sugar or dextrose in our bodies from the bread and potato foods we eat.

It is Noticeable that the dextrose sugar the Liver makes is the only kind the Body can utilize to warm us and to furnish motive power for the use of our Limbs.

Then Thirdly, Nature uses the Biliary waste to act as a Purgative to remove waste products, such as undigested food, etc.

Now we can see why the Liver, if deranged, entails upon us so much pain and discomfort.

Bile really means melancholy. Black Bile in the wrong place destroys the Temper, weakens the Energies, disorders the Nerves and Brain, and lowers the Strength.

The Liver is more frequently upset by the Stomach than by any other cause.

Hence a vigorous and Healthy Stomach is the first step to an active and Healthy Liver.

That is to say, when the Liver works rightly we do not know we have such an organ, but let it go wrong, and we soon know we have somehow outraged the most important and largest organ of our Body.

We want at once in Liver Disorders to do two things:

1. To stimulate the action of the Liver itself correctly.
2. To so help and aid Digestion, that the digestive work is better done, which means, for one thing, that less work is thrown on the Liver to do.

A new size (six ounce) bottle of Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d., is now on Sale at all Chemists and Stores.

What the Stomach cannot do for us when out of order, the Liver tries to set right. Within limits it can and does do this.

But if too much overworked the Liver strikes: upsets its own functions, and we feel the Disorder in every painful way possible.

The usual Symptoms of Sluggish or Disordered Liver are Constipation, Coated Tongue, Biliousness, and Nausea, particularly on rising in the morning. Severe frontal headache, pain between the Shoulders, and feelings of Faintness. The Appetite is poor, or altogether lost. The Temper is irritable, and there is often Palpitation, Sleeplessness, Weakness, with Nervousness and Low Spirits, verging on Melancholy.

Guy's Tonic has a stimulative power on a Sluggish Liver, and exerts a Tonic and corrective influence in all cases of Disordered Liver.

And while Providing for benefit, Guy's Tonic attains more lasting good by so strengthening and invigorating the Stomach and its Digestive powers, that the Liver is relieved of the over-work that is probably the cause of all the trouble.

This double process is a very valuable one, and is not possessed in the same degree by any remedy other than Guy's Tonic.

It is simply astonishing how much good Guy's Tonic does. Guy's Tonic succeeds because pains have been taken to ensure success, for Guy's Tonic was watched and tested in a West London physician's practice for many years before it was offered for general sale.

We invite attention to the following letter received from Mr. J. H. Kight, of Albert Street, Wednesbury, Staffordshire:

"Having suffered with severe Liver Complaint for the last three years, with Pains in the Back and Mental Depression, I have tried nearly everything without benefit, but after taking three doses of your Guy's Tonic, the Pains in the Back have entirely gone, and I feel as I have not done before for several years. I shall recommend Guy's Tonic wherever I go."

OGDEN'S

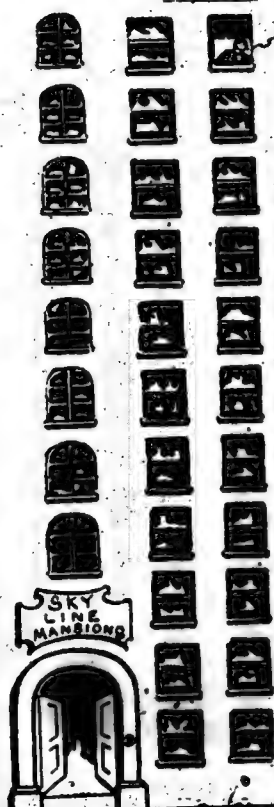
"GUINEA-GOLD"

CIGARETTES

A VERY HIGH

GRADE

SMOKE



M&C

SERIAL STORY.

"The Rose of Judah."

A TALE OF THE CAPTIVITY.

By **GEORGE GRIFFITH,**

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVI. (continued).

The Old Palace, as has been said, stood upon an artificial hill in the northern or royal quarter of the city near to the great temple of Bel. Like all the other great buildings of Babylon it was square in form, measuring some seven hundred feet in the side, and it contained three hundred and sixty rooms—the number of days in the Babylonian year—opening into corridors and court-yards and lighted either by curtained windows or sky-lights in the cedar-paneled roofs. In the centre of the great square, raised on terraces above the rest of the building, were the magnificent and closely-guarded chambers which formed the Harem, inhabited by the women of the Prince's court with their attendant slaves and guardian eunuchs, one of whom, armed with a drawn sword, stood at every door and at the end of every corridor, as well as at the top and bottom of every stair-case.

Dagan-Malak was waiting at the door of the little circular chamber, and as they came out he prostrated himself before them, and then led the way up a gently-sloping corridor paved with white marble and ornamented along the walls by frescoes representing the triumphs of the legendary kings of Syria over the demons who had dwelt in the land at their coming.

At the top of this they passed between two colossal statues with heads of lions, bodies of men, and talons of eagles, and by each of these stood a tall Ethiopian eunuch with a naked blade over his shoulder. They fell on their faces as Belshazzar approached, striking the floor three times with their foreheads. Then Dagan-Malak, turning to the right stopped before two ponderous doors of brass adorned with hundreds of figures in high relief and, taking one of a bunch of gilt keys that hung at his girdle, he turned back the bolt, and with an effort which made his fat chest heave, pulled one of the doors open.

As Miriam passed through a cry of wonder and admiration rose to her lips. She was the daughter of one of the noblest and wealthiest Hebrew families in Babylon, and had been accustomed to luxurious surroundings all her life; but never had she seen or even dreamt of anything like the almost unearthly splendour of the scene which she beheld as she crossed the threshold of the brazen gates. She saw before her a vast circular chamber roofed by a dome supported on a multitude of slender pillars of marble, some white as ivory and others of a pale rosy red.

The space under the dome was laid out as a garden, verdant with grass and bright with the hues of a thousand flowers. In the midst was a great marble basin out of which rose hundreds of tiny jets of water, which gave a delicious coolness to the air, and from this central basin four broad marble paths led to the square portals of four vast chambers. Their broad square doors were hung with curtains of silk so fine that the soft glimmer of lamps within could be distinctly seen through them.

As the gates clanged behind them Belshazzar turned to Miriam and said:

"This is the abode of the slaves of her whom the King shall make his Queen. Dagan-Malak, let them be summoned in the eastern chamber."

Dumb with wonder and admiration, Miriam suffered herself to be led through the hangings of the portal to the right and found herself in a great oblong, pillared hall, lighted by hundreds of softly-burning lamps, whose scented oil diffused a delicious, almost intoxicating perfume as it was consumed. The walls were covered with brilliant frescoes, the pillars were wreathed with flowers and leaves of gold and silver, in the midst of which twinkled the sparkle of jewels. Statues of alabaster and ivory stood between the pillars on pedestals of porphyry and the veined granite of Syene. The roof was panelled with polished antinwood resting on carved beams of cedar, and at the end opposite the door was a broad dais on which stood a great silk-canopied couch of ivory and precious woods inlaid with gold.

Belshazzar led Miriam by the hand to this and seated her upon it with every mark of deference that could have been shown to a Queen, and as he saw her wondering eyes moving from floor to roof and pillar to wall he said:

"In the King's house are many chambers like this, yet if his Queen did but tell him that they were too poor for her, they should instantly be destroyed and others more worthy of her presence built."

Miriam tried to falter something in reply, but her senses seemed sinking into a delicious intoxication of wonder. She was all eyes. She could only look about her and marvel like one newly arrived in a strange world infinitely more glorious than the one she had left.

Belshazzar, so far from being discontented with her silence, took it as a sign that the temptations of his royal magnificence were already beginning to have effect upon her senses—that he would only have to multiply these splendours about her to overpower her and dazzle her into consent and acceptance of his love.

"Now you shall see your slaves!" he said, dropping suddenly into the more familiar form of address.

He struck a silver gong that hung at one end of the couch, the curtains were drawn aside from the portal, and two streams of women and girls filed in and ranged themselves in silent, brilliant ranks on either side of the hall.

Every type of female beauty seemed to be represented

among them. There were some whose hair was as black as night, and others whose pale golden locks shone like pure spun silk under the lamplight. Some were in the full bloom and beauty of mature womanhood, and others were girls who seemed to have only just left childhood behind them. There were dusky beauties from the East and South and white-skinned girls from the unknown regions of the West and North, and every art of costume and the toilet had been used to set off the loveliness of each to the best advantage.

Belshazzar raised his hand, and all of them instantly fell on their knees, crossed their hands over their breasts and turned their faces towards the couch.

"Look," he said to Miriam, "are they not fair? They have been brought here from all the lands of earth and each is the fairest flower of her own land. There are daughters of kings and great princes among them. They have been educated in every art and skill that can charm the sense of man, and there is not one of them who would not be the envy of all the rest if she could win but a smile or a word of kindness from their lord—and yet I tell you, Miriam, on the honour of a king, that this is the first time they have seen my face since that day when I saw you—since my eyes were first blessed with the sight of your beauty on the shore of the lake of Borsip. They are slaves with whom I can do as I will, slaves to kill or keep alive as please my fancy. Now tell me, what has hindered me from making you as one of them?"

Miriam looked at him with a frightened glance and murmured:

"What am I but the handmaiden of my Lord? How should I know?"

"Then I will tell you, Miriam," he whispered, "but first you shall know what it is like to be a Queen."

He beckoned to Dagan-Malak who was standing a respectful distance from the dais and said:

"Let her slaves do homage to their queen!"

"No, no, my Lord, I pray thee!" cried Miriam, roused to fear by his words. "No, who am I that they should do homage to me? Are they not as good as I am? I am not a queen, but a simple maiden of Judah. I pray thee of thy mercy, let me go back to my own home as the Queen said I should when the war was over."

"All in good time, sweet Miriam," laughed Belshazzar. "True, you are not a queen yet. I only want to show you what it will be like to be one. Now look, they shall worship you as a goddess if you wish."

Miriam, half dazed by the splendour of the scene and the strangeness of her situation, sat on the couch and watched with wide, wondering eyes as the splendidly dressed women and girls of the harem came two by two and cast themselves at her feet, embracing them with their jewelled hands and hailing her Queen and Mistress in many an unknown tongue.

"Now they shall dance and make music for you," said Belshazzar when the last pair had prostrated themselves, "and you shall hear the love-songs of every land on earth mingled in chorus with their lutes and harps, and meanwhile some of the treasures which shall be yours shall be laid at your feet, and when you have seen them I will tell you that all of them would be too small a price for a single smile from your lips or one kind look from your eyes."

"Lord, I need nothing. There is nothing that would be so precious to me as thy permission for me to depart to my father's house. What should I do with all these treasures of which thou speakest?" murmured Miriam as two trains of slaves came in laden with vessels and boxes and trays of gold and ivory and precious woods heaped up with gems, and others carrying robes and bales of the richest and finest stuffs from the looms of India, Persia and Arabia.

The robes were cast upon the floor, and the stuffs spread out, and the gems were poured from the vessels in a glittering rain upon them, until Miriam's dazed eyes were looking down on such wealth as human eyes had seldom gazed upon.

Belshazzar could not believe that any daughter of man could look upon such glories or resist the prayer of him who could give them to her, and, pointing to the silk and jewel-strewn floor with one hand, he laid the other upon her arm and said:

"There lies the ransom of a hundred princes. Look on me kindly but once; bid me but hope that some day thy heart may turn to me with love, and all shall be yours. Even as these slaves are yours, so will I be your slave, and all who serve me!"

Miriam strove hard to collect her scattered and dazzled senses. It was all like a dream to her, a dream in that long sleep of hers.

"Let me go! I cannot!" she murmured, pressing her hands to her eyes as though to shut out the sight of the tempting splendours. "Alas, thou hast asked for that which I have not to give! How can I give thee out of my heart what there is no longer in it? There is no love for thee there, Lord. My heart died when Belzan died—Forgive, Lord!"

"Nay, by Nisroch, I will not forgive!" shouted Belshazzar, stricken to the soul by the words which so strangely brought his unspeakable crime home to him with such fearful force. "I have been patient long enough, I have laid at thy feet, not only the honest love of a man, and the service of a king; but also more treasures than would have made the dower of a princess. Who art thou, daughter of a slave, whose father and mother are even now waiting in chains, for honour and life, or torment and death as thou shalt decide for them? I would have wooed and won thee as a man, I would have crowned thee queen as a king and laid an empire at thy feet—and thou hast scorned all this and me for the love of a dead soldier!"

"Thy heart is dead, is it? It is cold and there is no love left in it? Well, so be it. But thy body lives and thy blood flows warm within it. I have been tender and gentle with thee long enough, ungrateful one. Thou wilt not give that which I have besought thee for on my knees—I the Lord of life and death in Asshur! Then, by Nisroch, I will take that

which thou canst not withhold! If I cannot have thy love I will have thy beauty; if I cannot have thy soul I will have thy body! Dagan-Malak, bring hither a litter and carry this slave to her place!"

As Miriam heard these last, fateful words she sprang to her feet as though to escape from toils whence escape was impossible:

"God of my fathers, help and save!" she cried in a voice that rang sweetly clear above the murmur of the women and slaves in the hall, and, as the words left her lips, the last minute of the third hour came and brought release. Her outspread arms fell to her side, her long-fringed lids drooped slowly over her staring eyes; her body stiffened into corpse-like rigidity, and she rolled over on to the broad couch behind her and lay there, breathing soft'y, but, save for that, lifeless and senseless as one of the beautiful statues which were looking with sightless eyes down upon the strange scene in the Hall of the East.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"BEHOLD THE GREAT CITY!"

"BEHOLD the Great City!"

The words sprang in a shout of triumph from the lips of Cyrus the Great at sunrise on the morning after Belshazzar had ordered Dagan-Malak to carry Miriam to the apartments occupied by the women of his harem.

As her unconscious form had been carried away he had commanded that Daniel should be thrown into prison again, and that the imprisonment of Miriam's parents should be made more rigorous. The same evening, too, he had issued a decree depriving, not only the Hebrews themselves, but all Assyrians born of Hebrew mothers to be deprived of all rank and offices that they might hold, and, in the case of the actual Children of the Captivity, of all rights of citizenship as well.

Happily the Queen received information of his intention through one of her spies in the Old Palace two or three hours before the Act was made public. Her quick intellect instantly divined that one at least of Belshazzar's objects in doing this was to destroy what remnant of power she had left by degrading Arioch and several others of the officers of her Guard and household who, like him, were the sons of Jewish mothers.

Her decision was taken with the promptitude which characterised all her actions. She saw that Arioch, as her most trusted servant and as the friend of the man Belshazzar believed he had murdered, would almost certainly lose, not only his rank, but his life as well at the hands of the now irresponsible despot, and she determined to save him at all cost or hazard to herself.

So she sent instantly for him, told him of the danger that threatened him, gave him the Great King's own signet, inscribed with his cypher, and ordered him to leave the city at once, find the Camp of Cyrus and offer him her alliance and assistance.

Happily, as has been already mentioned, Arioch's own men held possession of the Gates, and that portion of the army at least was absolutely devoted both to himself and the Queen; so when he had taken leave of Nitocris he rode at once to the Gate of Semiramis, called out a troop of fifty of the men he could rely most implicitly upon and told them that he had been entrusted with a mission of the utmost importance to Sippar, the great northern fortress which Nebuchadnezzar had built on the Euphrates and connected with Kutha on the Tigris by a huge wall crossing the whole valley.

He only just got through the Gate in time, for an hour afterwards the order had gone out that all the gates of Imgur-Bel should be handed over to the King's Guards and that no one was to pass them without his special order. Arioch had expected this, and so he had crossed the seven miles to the outer rampart at the best speed of his horses and had passed through the Northern Gate in Nimitti-Bel before any pursuit was possible.

Then he had told his companions—nearly all of whom would have fallen under the ban of the King's proclamation—the true reason for his leaving the city and giving full liberty to any of them who chose to do so to go back. Not a man went, for every one of them knew that he would only go to the stake if he did, and, it was better to be an exile and an outlaw in the Desert than to trust to the tender mercies of Belshazzar. Moreover they knew very well murder and massacre and outrage would be the immediate result of the King's proclamation, and that nothing save the appearance of Cyrus and his hosts before the walls could save even a remnant of the People of the Captivity.

It was well known that Cyrus had crossed the Tigris at Kutha and was marching thence on Babylon. His advance-guard could not therefore be very far away and Arioch who, as was usual in those days of divided rule, considered that he owed all his allegiance to the Queen and none to the King, decided to make his way as quickly as possible to Cyrus and, after doing the Queen's errand, offer him his sword and such help as he could give him in rescuing his mistress from a position which would now hourly grow more perilous.

This, according to modern ideas, would look something very like desertion, but it must be remembered that in those days loyalty was personal, not national. Arioch was a soldier of the Queen not of the King. He, like many others, had long known that if she could have deposed Belshazzar and taken the throne herself she would have done so, and every officer and man of her Guards would have considered himself in honour bound to help her.

Now she had given him the Great King's signet and ordered him to leave Babylon not only for his own sake but also to seek out Arsames and, if possible, Cyrus, learn the truth about Belzan, and make terms with the Persian King for an alliance between them. This was the daring stroke which Nitocris had been meditating ever since she had come to the conclusion that her grandson now that he had sunk back into luxury and self-indulgence and had given way so utterly to the madness of his passion for Miriam must soon

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ERNEST LONG.

There are two points to emphasize in the letter we are going to ask you to kindly read. One is about bronchitis, and the other is in relation to the teething period of babies. But let us withhold our comments until after you have read the letter.

13 Chaplin Street, Forest Hill, S.E.

"May 2nd, 1898.

"Sirs,—I feel I cannot speak too highly of your valuable preparation, it has done my baby so much good. He had a bad attack of bronchitis last November, and I gave him Scott's Emulsion, and it did him so much good that I kept on with it all the winter. I feel sure he would have been bad all the winter but for that, as all my children as babies suffer from bronchitis. I should strongly recommend it to all mothers whose children are at all weak at the chest, as it is both a food and medicine. I speak from experience. My baby is a fine specimen of it, and I shall still continue to use it while he is teething.

"I am, &c. (Signed) M. LONG."

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lungs, so common in Great Britain, Scott's Emulsion is without an equal. The reference in the letter to its being "both food and medicine" is quite true, as Scott's Emulsion combines all the curative and nourishing properties of cod-liver oil, glycerine, and hypophosphites. The hypophosphites aid digestion, feed the nerves, nourish the bones, and sustain the brain, while the glycerine facilitates the absorption of the oil. In this way all the ingredients work together to improve health.

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become an impossible ruler for Babylon—and thus too it came about that, after riding nearly all night in the direction of Kutha, Arioch and his companions had fallen in with a strong body of Parthian horse scouting and foraging about forty miles to the northward of Babylon.

Arioch soon made the Parthian leader understand that they were fugitives from Babylon and that he carried a message from Nitocris to Cyrus, and when the Captain of the scouts had made certain that there was no other force behind them he put them under a strong escort and sent them to the vanguard; and before Arioch slept that night he had the delight of clasping Belshazzar's hand again and feeling his grip returned by one which showed how complete his recovery had been.

"Behold the Great City! By the Sacred Flame, it seems to me that if we cannot get through those walls we shall need wings to get over them, for never yet was tower built or scaling ladder made that would reach half up to the top."

The Persian King was riding at the head of the vanguard with Arsames and Belshazzar on his right hand and Arioch on his left. He had been conversing with the latter for an hour or so during the march and when he saw the early rays of the sun shining upon the colossal black mass of the Nimitti-Bel, surmounted by its hundreds of towers, stretching away on either side in endless ranks as far as the eye could reach like some row of mighty, ever-watchful sentinels, he felt by no means sorry for the assurance that he had just received that he had friends and allies within the walls as well as outside them.

Of course from the desert there was nothing to be seen of the city itself to justify the King's exclamation—Only the vast stretch of wall surmounted by its double towers cutting the western sky-line clear and black and rising from the level plain like a cliff as seen from the ocean. Of Babylon itself there was nothing visible, since the wall of Imgur-Pel lay seven miles behind this tremendous rampart, the height of which is given by the great historian of antiquity, Herodotus, as three hundred and fifty feet, or nearly as high as the dome of St. Paul's.

Still, the sight was sufficiently imposing to impress even the imagination of the son of Cambyzes, and as they got nearer and the beams of the rising sun began to flash on the polished brass coverings and ornamentations of the huge gates, he turned to Arsames again and said:

"He who raised a wall like that, Arsames, might well have been called the Great King even if he had done nothing else, and, as for his other works, if the fortifications of Sippar and Kutha had been maintained as he made them and properly garrisoned, the land between the Waters would have been more impregnable than a city built on a rock."

"And," added Belshazzar in a tone of familiarity which surprised Arioch, "if the Great King were still ruling in Babylon, my Lord would never even have seen them, for in those days there were other fortresses to Babylon, the phalanx of the warriors of Asshur which the invaders of Shinar had to meet before they saw its walled cities."

A passing frown swept across the open, honest brow of Cyrus, but it was gone in a moment, and he laughed:

"Well, friend Belshazzar, I honour you more for saying that than if you had told me that the walls of Babylon would fall down at the sound of my trumpets. You yourself were a good son of Asshur, and are so still. No man ever built that phalanx more strongly than you did before Erech, as we know to our cost, and the time shall come when you shall build it again, for now I am warring not against Babylon and her people, but against this half-witted tyrant of yours who does not deserve to sit in the place of a king."

"Why are we marching here in sight of his outer walls with never a regiment sent against us? Why have Kutha and Sippar opened their gates to us? Why have I been welcomed as a friend rather than as an invader? Why has our friend Arioch here been sent by the Queen with a greeting to me?"

"Because," said Belshazzar with a harsh bitter laugh, "because a murderer and ravisier sitting in the place of a king is like a demon who would take the place of a god, and such the Lord of Hosts shall judge even though he should surround himself with triple walls of brass."

"Even so!" said Cyrus, reining in his horse. "And now, Arsames, tell them to sound a halt. Let my tent be brought up and let us breakfast. Let the Parthians and Bactrians go out to the right and left till they have encircled the walls from the river to the north even to the banks of the south, let no violence be done to any not under arms and let it be proclaimed to the country folk that Cyrus has come not to lay Babylon waste with fire and sword, but only to war against the tyrant who has wasted her strength in riotous living behind her walls and dare not lead his armies out beyond them to meet us on the plain."

"And then," he went on turning to Belshazzar, "we will have the scribes and these two scoundrels up and prepare our messages to Belshazzar and to his people."

"And may the Lord of Hosts grant that neither they nor we come too late!" added Belshazzar with a long yearning look towards the mighty rampart beyond which, far away in the heart of Babylon, his well-beloved lay, as he now knew, helpless at the mercy of an irresponsible tyrant maddened by an unholiness passion.

"There shall be no time lost, friend Belshazzar," said Cyrus looking gravely and kindly at him. "As thou knowest none has been lost so far. It is not yet a hundred days since, thanks to your valour and genius, we were defeated before Erech and here we are with three hundred thousand men behind us and the walls of Babylon in front of us. I would that I had known then what I know now. If I had done, many a brave fellow whose bones are whitening in the desert down yonder would have been riding with us to-day."

"And the arrow of my Lord the King—" began Belshazzar. "Would not have made a way into thy breast for my love to follow it," laughed Cyrus, "and thou, friend Belshazzar, would have been an enemy instead of a friend."

"And the King," added Arioch respectfully and yet without any trace of servility in his tone, "would have spent his strength in the desert until his hopes had wasted away like

the snows on Zagros when the sun comes northward, for behind yonder wall, as I have told my Lord, and as Arsames hath told him, lie leagues of fertile land enough to feed the city at a pinch for years, since all who could not fight or work would be thrust out into the desert to die, and beyond the corn-lands and the vineyards is another wall as high and strong as this one, and then Babylon herself, and the pick of the armies of Asshur."

"Of which," laughed Cyrus with the frank good-nature that endeared him to everybody who was brought in contact with him, "the two bravest and most skilful captains are now riding by my side!"

"Not so," said Belshazzar. "My Lord the King forgets Melzar my father, Chief Captain of the Host, who, if there had been a king in Babylon instead of this miserable madman—"

"Would have met us here in the Plain Between the Waters and, as you have good right to believe, have done with us as you did at Erech," laughed Cyrus again, without a trace of ill-will in his voice. "Well, that was a good fight well fought, and since your father has no doubt all your own skill and more experience, we might have come off even worse than we did in the south. But," he continued with a sudden change of tone, "that is a matter rather for a council of war than a conversation between friends."

At this moment Arsames came back to say that the King's orders had been obeyed. The trumpets were sounding the halt all along the front and down towards the main army. The call was taken up by regiment after regiment until like a series of echoes it died away into silence in the distance. The night march was over and hundreds of thousands of men and animals were already preparing for the welcome rest and refreshment.

Arsames, according to the custom of the time, dismounted, and was about to kneel beside the King's charger so that he could put his foot on his shoulder, but Cyrus, with one of those acts of condescension and friendliness which endeared every man in his army high and low to him, stopped him with a motion of his hand and said, still laughing:

"No, no Arsames, the King is not here; only the Captain of the hosts of the Medes and Persians. Keep your homage till I sit on the Lion-Throne." And with that he threw his right leg over his horse's neck, and slipped out of the saddle and walked away towards the tent which had already been erected in the shade of a little grove of trees by the side of one of the artificial water-courses, now half-choked with sand, which in the days of the Great King had spread fertility through all the land of Shinar.

"A true king of men, that!" said Belshazzar as he and Arioch swung themselves from their saddles. "And not only a king but a man. There is not one in his army from Arsames, who rules lands in Media wider than Babylon herself, to the wildest Bactrian whose home is a hut of reeds and mud that does not love him. As for me, if I had been his brother he would not have tended me with more loving care, and when I was well and strong again and able to sit a horse and carry weapons, instead of holding me as a hostage as he might have done and bartering for me with my father, he gave me back my arms and armour with the best horse, save his own charger, that was in his stables, set free two hundred prisoners that he had taken in the rally which Belshazzar should never have permitted, and told me that the way to Babylon was open."

"And you did not come?" said Arioch. "You remained in the Persian camp when you knew how many hearts were sore on your account in Babylon?"

"Yes," said Belshazzar between his teeth, "because I had already learnt that Belshazzar had sent me to Erech, not to fight but to be murdered, that those whom I should have trusted for my life had been bribed with his gold to sell me to death, as they nearly did. I knew why he had done this and I have sworn by the God of Battles that I would no longer be servant of his."

"Cyrus treated me like a friend and a brother. Why should I leave him to go back to the man I had fought for faithfully and who had betrayed me to death so that he might the more easily betray Miriam to dishonour? You may call it treason or what you like, but I am now the servant of Cyrus to the death since he gave me my life, and," he went on, gripping his sword-hilt, "I have sworn also that, with the help of the Lord and this good sword of mine, Belshazzar shall pay the only price he can pay for the happiness he has robbed me of. Cyrus himself has promised me this: that no other hand than mine shall slay him."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE TENT OF CYRUS.

As soon as the King's tent was pitched and the table laid Cyrus invited his Assyrian guests to breakfast. During the meal the prospects of the campaign were discussed in an informal fashion, and when it was over the chief captains of the army were summoned and a regular council of war was held to consider the propositions which Arioch had been commissioned by the Queen to put before Cyrus. These, Arioch stated in the brief blunt speech of a soldier without any attempt to persuade his hearers to accept them, or, on the other hand, to enlarge upon the real difficulties which lay in the way of the invaders.

When he had finished Cyrus turned to Arsames and said: "Thou hast seen both the inside and outside of Babylon and thou hast spoken with this Belshazzar face to face, and thou hast to some extent shared the confidence of the Queen. Let us hear first what thou hast to say."

"My Lord," said Arsames, "it seems to me that the greatest obstacles in your path to conquest are not the mighty walls and high towers of Babylon, for there are gates in the walls, and gates can be opened. But the gates may not be opened for many days and meanwhile there are the armies of the south under no less a leader than the father of Belshazzar, and we must not forget too that Khudur who, as Belshazzar tells us no doubt in his modesty had as much to do with the winning of the battle of Erech as he had, is also in the South with the garrisons of half a score of cities to draw upon."

"Therefore it seems to me that, should Belshazzar make himself strong enough in Babylon to overcome the Queen and those who are with her and so keep the gates fast shut, we may break our strength to pieces against yonder wall while Melzar and Khudur encompass us from behind, laying waste the country and cutting off our supplies until we find ourselves, as it were, between the sea and rocks."

"From what I saw and heard in Babylon the country between the two walls will feed her for two years at least; therefore my counsel would be to skirt the walls to the southward, keep our communications open, with Kutha and the east by way of the mountains, entrench ourselves here and build a dam across the Euphrates and so turn the water into the desert and leave Babylon to thirst. If, as we are told, there is revolution in the city the very knowledge that we are doing this will make it come all the quicker. I would advise speedier measures but for the armies in the south."

"The advice of a soldier, Arsames," said Cyrus, "but of one who forgets that we have friends as well as foes in Babylon. They would thirst with the others. And, more than that, they would doubtless suffer more through the revolution which your thirst would bring on than our enemies would. Moreover such a plan would take many weeks to carry through, and that would be too slow a matter for some of us. What think you, Belshazzar?"

"I think with Arsames," said Belshazzar, smiling at the discomfiture which the King's words had brought upon his captain, "but as I know of a speedier way of carrying out his plans it may please my Lord to hear it."

"Speak on, son of Melzar," said Cyrus significantly. "Our ears are open."

Belshazzar was silent for a few moments and Cyrus and the others respected his silence because they knew how hard a task it was for the man who had so nearly been the victor of Erech and whose father had led the hosts of the Great King to give counsel which might lead to the fall of Babylon and the end of her ancient reign in Shinar.

He was thinking how different it all might have been had Belshazzar only been a worthy descendant of the House of Sargon, if he had not been stricken by the fever of this love-madness, if he had been a king and a warrior instead of a love-sick seeker of his own pleasures, the thief of another man's love and a common would-be murderer.

Then the victory of Erech would have been pushed home, the garrisons would have marched out from the frontier-town, the armies of Shinar would have supported them from all points, and Cyrus would never have been able to make that wonderful march of his from the field of his defeat, evading the garrisons of the south, rallying and strengthening his armies as he went, and at last joining it to the other army which was waiting for him on the banks of the Tigris.

Then it would have been victory, complete and crushing. The sorrows of Cambyzes, heaved in among the marshes of the south, could either have been slain or taken back to adorn the triumph of the Lord of Asshur, and all that the arms of Cambyzes had won would have been added to the dominions of the King of Babylon. But what was to be done with such a sot and madman as now disgraced the Lion-Throne, a creature who would murder the commander of an army because he was his rival in love, who would risk the safety of his empire for the gratification of a personal spite.

"The counsel of Arsames is good," he continued, when such thoughts as these had flashed through his mind, "but as the King hath said, they would take too long to carry out. Therefore, since Sippar has submitted to our Lord, I would recommend that the great reservoir of Nebuchadnezzar should be instantly repaired, and, that done, the bed of the Euphrates can be laid dry in twelve hours. Also that several regiments should be sent by Sippar, where the river may be crossed, down the western bank to the walls of the New Palace from which, as the King already knows, there are two ways into Babylon; one a bridge across the river and the other a tunnel under its bed."

"Lastly, as regards the armies of the South, let the King give me Sharruk, my shield-bearer, and Ziggur, my charioteer, with a sufficient guard and the written evidence that shall be taken before my Lord and I will carry them to Melzar my father; and when Melzar knows that a crowned Lord of Asshur has bribed his soldiers to slay his son, and when he knows of this edict of Belshazzar's, depriving his wife's people of all their rights, reducing them to slaves and letting loose massacre and murder upon them, I do not think it will be very difficult for his son to persuade him that the rule of Cyrus in Babylon would be better for the Land of Shinar than the rule of Belshazzar."

There was a little silence after these weighty words, spoken gravely, almost sorrowfully, by the only man who had ever met the son of Cambyzes in battle and thoroughly defeated him. Then Cyrus, after a swift glance round the council-table, turned to Belshazzar and said:

"Those are words upon which the fate of an empire may well turn, and I know that they are spoken with a straight tongue. Thou wilt make them good, if needs be, with thy life. Doso and I swear by the Sacred Flame, I pledge my honour as a king and a soldier, that I will rule Babylon according to her own laws with mercy and justice, that I will hurt no man in his life or his goods, nor any woman in her honour, that I will take no prisoners and make no slaves, that Nitocris the Queen shall be regent over the city for her life, and that the armies of Babylon shall march side by side in equal rank and honour with the hosts of Media and Persia to the conquest of new lands. I, the King have sworn it!"

"And I," said Belshazzar, standing up and raising his right hand above his head. "I swear by the name of the Lord of Hosts that if my father will not do this thing I will come back and fight under the banner of my Lord against him."

"Then let Ziggur and Sharruk be brought in so that the accusation against Belshazzar may be made according to the laws of the Medes and Persians which alter not," said Cyrus, turning to his Chamberlain.

(To be continued.)

"Is Football Improving?" is the vexed question nowadays. If you want to learn something of the play and players of other days, read "Old Time Cup Finals" in next Wednesday's ATHLETIC RECORD.

HOME NOTES PAGE.

A PAGE MORE PARTICULARLY FOR LADIES.

IBOBEK will be glad to answer, in this page, questions of general interest upon household matters, so far as space permits. Envelopes should be marked HOME NOTES.

Soups should never be allowed to remain in the sauce-pan all night, or to get cold in it.

Make Camphor Ball. by dissolving together two ounces of lard, two ounces of white wax, and half an ounce of powdered camphor. (Reply to BELLA.)

To Glaze Meat Pies. Separate the yolk from the white of an egg; beat the former and brush it over the top of the pastry; but do not let any touch the edges as it will prevent the pastry from rising.

To Clean Gaiters is perfectly easy if you wash them with saddle soap, dissolving a little soda in the water. Rub the soap on with a flannel, and do not make the leather more wet than you are absolutely obliged. After the leather is dry, polish it with any dressing you prefer. (Reply to A. A., Plymouth.)

Baked Tongue. After soaking a salt tongue, wipe it and put it in an earthenware pan, spread butter all over the top of it, cover with a flour and water crust, and bake according to its size in a steady oven. When cooked, take the tongue and straighten it out on a board, fastening it through the root and tip with skewers. When cold, brush over with glaze, and garnish with slices of lemon and curled parsley.

The Spirit Varnish you require is made thus: To one pint of spirits of wine, add two ounces of gum sandarach, one ounce of shellac, half an ounce of mastic, half a pound of gum benjamin, and one ounce of Venice turpentine. This may be coloured red with Indian red, or yellow with saffron. Stand it in a warm place until the gums are dissolved, then strain off. I have not, of course, tried this recipe, but it was sent to me by a practical reader who spoke well of it. (Reply to HERMIT.)

Pig's Feet and Haricot Beans. Get two pig's feet, see that they are quite clean, and soak about an hour. Put these into a jar with a close lid, and stew gently for two hours, just covered with water and seasoned with pepper and salt. Add a quart of par-boiled beans, see that all are well covered with the liquor by adding more water, and put back into the oven. When it boils up, let the contents of the jar cook very slowly for three hours, and serve hot.

The Cheap Bed Covering you wish to make is prepared as follows: You will find that it costs far less than a good best quality blanket and be quite as warm. Get sufficient unbleached cotton wadding to cover the bed in one or two thicknesses as preferred. Cover this with coloured glazed calico, and quilt it coarsely. The covering can be sewn round by machine with the wadding, except on one of the long sides, which must be drawn over the wool and then sewn neatly by hand. (Reply to ELGIN.)

Macaroni and Mince Shape. Boil some macaroni till tender in water seasoned with pepper and salt. Grease a medium-sized round cake tin. Cover the bottom with coils of macaroni, and the sides with upright pieces laid closely together. When the tin is thus lined fill it carefully with mince made thus: Take the remains of any cold meat, pass it three times through a mincing machine, adding, if possible, a little ham. Pound all together with a small piece of butter. Season with cayenne, salt, allspice, chopped parsley, and grated lemon rind. Moisten with a little milk, or two well-beaten eggs. When the tin is quite full, cover with macaroni. Tie buttered paper over the top, and steam for three-quarters of an hour. Serve turned out and with a thick gravy poured round. Lay thin slices of beetroot between the macaroni, and dust chopped parsley over all. The success of this dish depends greatly on the seasoning of it.

Home Cookery.

Edited by ISOBEL.

Ready 1st of each Month. Price 1d.

The December number contains numerous recipes for various Xmas dainties, including home-made sweets.

Your White Straw hat may be blacked with
any good straw polish
sold for that purpose. (Reply to B. M. N.)

A Vegetable for Winter. Boil carrots till tender, and mash with pepper, butter and salt. Press into a mould, heat through and turn out to serve.

To Take Oil out of Leather, apply the white of an egg to the spot and dry it in the sun. Repeat the process until the stain is removed. (Reply to IGNORAMUS.)

Plain Currant Loaf. three ounces of sugar, and two two pounds of bread dough. Work six ounces of well-washed currants, ounces of butter into Bake like the ordin-

To Keep Brass from Tarnishing where exposed to the elements is difficult, I know. The only mixture I know of which is effectual is powdered emery powder mixed with paraffin. This I have seen used on brass harness fittings with good results. (Reply to JAMES BRASS.)

Temperance Ginger Wine. Pour five quarts of boiling water on to two pounds of loaf sugar, and three-quarters of an ounce of tartaric acid. When cold, add two drachms of essence of ginger, and two drachms of essence of capsicum; colour with a little burnt sugar. Strain through muslin and bottle. (Reply to COFFEE HOUSE.)

To Braise. Strictly speaking, to braise meat is to cook it with fire above and below, that is to say, it is prepared as for stewing, placed on a very slow fire, and hot ashes are laid on the lid of the stew-pan which is made for that purpose. When this is not practicable the meat is placed on a layer of fat bacon, and fried on both sides with various vegetables, herbs, etc. It is then moistened with a certain amount of stock, and allowed to simmer slowly at the side of the stove, or it may be cooked in the oven. (*Reply to JESSIE.*)

Onion and Sage Fritters are very good especially so if served with apple sauce. The ingredients are five ounces of onions, one teaspoonful of powdered sage, two eggs, and four ounces of stale bread. First soften the bread in cold water, squeeze it dry, add the boiled and chopped onion, the powdered sage, a little pepper and salt. Add two well-beaten eggs, and mix all together. Drop the fritters formed from this mixture into boiling fat, and fry till a golden brown.

To Know how to Make Salt Butter
Resemble Fresh is very useful now fresh butter is scarce. Pour a quart of chilled water on to a pound of salt butter, and work it well with the hands or a wooden spoon for a quarter of an hour. Pour away the water, and rinse the butter in several waters; add a very little salt, and pat for the table. If you have some skim milk to spare, use it for the first rinsing after the chilled water. Butter treated like this will always waste a little in bulk, but never in quality.

Pork Pies are seasonable just now, and excellent if prepared as follows; Make a short crust with three-quarters of a pound of flour, and six ounces of lard. Knead into a stiff dough with cold water. Roll out the pastry about a quarter of an inch thick, line the tins with it, and fill them with pork prepared thus: Chop up a pound of pork, fat and lean, in small square pieces; season with a teaspoonful of salt and half that quantity of pepper and allspice. Cover the pies with paste, wet the edges, and press firmly together. Ornament the top, and make a hole in the centre; brush over with egg, and bake in a moderate oven.

My Chutnee Recipe is as follows: First procure the green ginger; if it is not to be had near you, it can be obtained at any large seedman in Covent Garden. Ingredients: One pound of salt, four pounds of sugar, half a pound of garlic, half a pound of green ginger, one pound of sweet almonds, two pounds of stoned raisins (weighed after stoning), one pound of mustard seed, four ounces of dried red chillies, eight pounds of finely-chopped, unripe, juicy baking apples, and six quarts of vinegar. Previous to blending these together, soak the green ginger in the vinegar for ten days. Pound all the ingredients separately in a mortar, and moisten with vinegar. After thoroughly pounding, mix all the ingredients together in a stone jar, and stew in a large pan of water for a day over a slow fire. When properly cooked, the ingredients should be soft and perfectly blended. When cold, place in bottles for use. This will keep for years and improves with age. (Reply to FITZGERALD.)

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To Parboil means to put anything in cold water and bring it to boiling point, then remove and drain dry.

Before Cutting a Cork always damp it slightly, then use a sharp knife, and there will be no ragged edges.

When Boiling an Old Fowl add a good pinch of carbonate of soda to the water, which will help to make it tender.

Locks. In a well-regulated house the door latches, hinges and locks should be oiled every three months. This will keep them in good working order and save noise.

Kummel may be made as follows, and is the liqueur you describe: Take a bottle of gin, and add to it one ounce of carraway seeds, and half-a-pound of sugar candy. Keep tightly corked, and after two months, strain into a clean bottle, and it will be fit for use. (Reply to ANEBLEY.)

Macaroni Pudding prepared as follows will, I feel sure, please you: Put one pint of milk in a sauce-pan with the rind of half a lemon, and sugar to taste. When the milk quite boils, drop in two ounces of macaroni (broken into short lengths), and simmer for thirty minutes. Then beat up an egg, which must be stirred into the macaroni when it has cooled a little. Pour into a greased pie-dish, scatter some powdered cinnamon over, and bake for ten minutes. (Reply to READER.)

Make Imitation Foie-Gras as follows: Scald the liver (goose liver is best), and add to it six or eight ounces of calf's liver, chop finely, and pound in a mortar, or pass through a wire sieve. Then add four ounces of fresh butter, put on the stove in a bright stew-pan, and stir all together for a few moments. Next add two tablespoonfuls of cream, a little cayenne and salt. Stir over the fire till the mixture becomes thick, then add a few truffles chopped finely, pot and cover with butter.

(Reply to: CLACTON-ON-SEA.)

Fish Soup. Put any fish-bones you may have into a stew-pan, with a carrot, turnip, onion, a small bouquet of herbs, three or four cloves, a pint of white wine, and cover with water or a light stock. After boiling about one hour and a half, thicken with diluted cornflour (milk), strain, and pass through a fine hair sieve. Replace the soup on the fire, season to taste, and when ready to serve, add a mixture composed of three yolks of eggs, one ounce of butter, and a gill of cream. In the soup-tureen put some small rounds of fillets of sole and a little chopped parsley, pour the hot soup over, and serve. Fried dice of bread should accompany this delicate potage.

Isobel

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YOU POP THE QUESTION —WE DO THE REST.

NEXT week will be the Christmas Double Number of *Pearson's Weekly*. It will contain several well-illustrated stories, and will be altogether crammed with topical reading matter. A new serial story, entitled "Bunderby's Boys," by Arnold Golsworthy, begins in this number, with illustrations by Tom Browne.

A CORRESPONDENT living in Devonshire sends me a copy of a poster which was placed in conspicuous positions in the town of South Molton recently, in which the guardians announced that they would on a certain day "proceed to the election of a single person to fill the office of porter at the Union workhouse at a salary of £18 per annum, with rations, apartments, and washing in the house, subject to the deductions prescribed by the Poor Laws Officers' Superannuation Act, 1896. The person elected will be required to perform all the necessary shaving and haircutting for the inmates, and to make himself generally useful. Preference will be given to a shoemaker." Goodness! That pay is almost as bad as your poor old editor's.

STATIST wishes to know which of all the weekly journals in England circulates the largest number of copies per week. Spare our blushes, good statist! Almost any other question you may like to ask, I shall be happy to answer, but on this point my natural modesty bids me preserve an ironclad silence.

W. R. O. and F. A. R., are two young men who have got into serious trouble over our article on the various ways of kissing. They write as follows: "Meeting two lady friends the other day, the conversation turned on periodicals. 'Are not the illustrations in *Pearson's* lovely?' said one. 'I must have them,' added the other. Mistaking this reference to your MAGAZINE as intended for the *Weekly*, and, consequently, as an invitation to participate in the joys so vividly portrayed, we endeavoured to accept it. The possibility of encountering pugilistic brothers and enraged fathers compels us to go to our daily avocations by a circuitous route." My correspondents now appeal to me for a cheque to cover the extra travelling expenses so incurred. I am sorry that I do not feel called upon to go so far as this, but I hope that these two unfortunate young gentlemen will find some solace in the gold-plated pencil-case which I have sent to each. If the young ladies in question will communicate with me and prove their identity I will do the same for them.

WILL all those good people who sent in an outline of the left hand please forward on a sheet of paper an exact outline of the right hand, addressed to the "Outline Editor." This is a most exciting game. Everyone should go in for it. If you haven't sent the outline of your left hand, you should do so at once, in the same envelope as that which contains your right. All attempts must reach this office by Tuesday, December 27th. It is necessary to do this in order that you may qualify for the prizes offered in the first instance. The qualifications are—ah! but you wait and see.

SCRIBO has only lately entered upon a commercial career, but during his brief experience he has come into contact with a large number of clerks. His patriotic soul has been grieved by the observation of German and British occupants of desks in commercial houses, and the resulting conclusion that the former—in his opinion—are far better prepared for a business career than the latter. "Why is it?" he asks. "I am not prepared to agree with you that the difference is so great as you seem to imagine. Commercial education in this country has not been attended to so much as in Germany, and this accounts in part for the difference; but there is another point which is often lost sight of. Our young fellows go in largely for sports; the Germans do not. Now, as there are only a limited number of hours in each day, the man who devotes so much time to sport has so much less time to apply to study—even if he has any at all. The time which the Briton gives up to outdoor exercise and amusement, is chiefly devoted by the majority of Germans to study. While this state of things continues we cannot be surprised if we are beaten in certain spheres, but as our system makes us colonists and empire-builders we have abundant compensation.

AMOR writes for some information on the wearing of rings by men: "I have a ring," he writes, "my first ring, which finger ought I to wear it on?" Well, the method pursued by the average man, to whom such an idea never occurs until someone makes him a present of the piece of jewellery in question, is to put it on any odd finger that it will fit. But as there seem to be some rules in existence on the subject, I append the same for the guidance of AMOR, and anyone who may be similarly troubled. If a man wants a wife, he wears a gold ring on the first finger of the left hand; if he be engaged, he wears it on the second finger; and if married, on the third; while if he never intends to be married the golden hoop goes on the fourth finger.

JANET.—The stem side of the orange is not nearly so sweet and juicy as the other half.

STENO.—Between the publication of Willis's system of shorthand in 1602 and that of Pitman in 1837 there were 201 systems published. Since the latter date, according to some authorities, nearly 300 varieties of stenography have been given to the world. Many reporters use a system of their own.

S. J. B.—No matter how much you think the man cares for you, you have no right to interfere between him and his betrothed. They will have trouble soon enough, and good form suggests that you should not start it.

N. T.—In the twelve years ending with 1813 the French Government enrolled rather more than four and a half million men for military and naval service. Three-fourths of these men died in battle, or of wounds or diseases resulting from war.

E. B. considers the enormous profits that have been made of recent years in the meat extract business "simply wonderful," and would like to know who first discovered that there was money to be made in that direction. It originated in Edinburgh. A butcher in that city noticed that his customers ordered large quantities of gravy beef, and on reflection came to the conclusion that a large trade might be done in the sale of beef extract, whereby the householder would be saved the trouble of extracting the essence for himself. He accordingly left the butchering business and came to London. The new business prospered, but finding English beef to be very dear, he opened up connections with Chicago, from which place he got his supply for some years. At this time the capital of the concern was some £30,000. Later he discovered that beef was cheaper in the Argentine than in the Northern States of America, and so he again moved the scene of his operations. At the present time most of the Bovril extract is prepared in its initial stages on the Uruguay River, and the sale forms the staple of the business of the company, which was floated with a capital of two and a half millions! To complete the story, it should be added that the Edinburgh butcher is now a millionaire.

TRAVELLER.—If the claim put forward two or three years ago on behalf of Danish railways is correct, railway travelling in that country is pretty safe. It was then claimed that the average casualties during twenty years had been at the rate of 1 in 3,500,000 passengers.

It is impossible to say how our magnificent offer of one hundred books for the nominal sum of £7 has been received by P.W. readers, for, owing to the advent of Christmas, I am obliged to go to press some days before last week's number is published. Personally, however, I have no doubt on the matter. There can be no two ways about it. All the books are popular. We know this. We do not rely upon the individual opinion of one man, however learned and able he may be. We think we know our readers fairly well, and constant association with them has resulted in our being able to grasp the exact sort of thing they like in reading matter. However, you cannot do better than look through the list yourself, and see if your opinion with regard to good and useful reading matter tallies with mine.

R. Y. S. is a signalman in Her Majesty's Navy, also a poet. He complains that we do not publish many lower-deck sayings in P.W., and endeavours to remedy the deficiency by inclosing a poem of a comfortable length, which you will not find on this page or any page of this paper, nor in any other number to come. He doesn't claim to be an educated man, for he admits that his "old lady"—by whom I suppose he means his mother—used to squander a penny a week over his education, but he sought the assistance of a mess-mate, who is one of the educated people, and who, my correspondent incidentally mentions, would not have been serving the Queen now had he not hit his governess on the head with a roll of music at some remote period of his existence. The rhyme is entitled "A Weep from the Chart House," and tells of the work of a signalman. Of course, he begins by describing the break of day. That is inevitable. All amateur poets do that. But R. Y. S. plunges in a ludicrous fashion from the "rosy, pinky hues," to the moment when:

Gently up your boko,
Steal the fumes of Navy cocoa.

"Boko," I understand, on consulting the chief office boy, is Russian for "nose." The work of the signalman is then touchingly described, until dinner-time, when:

Everyone a piece has taken,
Of rusty, steamy bacon.
(Of crispy, crawly bacon).
And amid the din and rattle,
Of this pork and peaseoup battle,
They rush into the mess to grab a plate.

It is continued in this style until bed time, and altogether runs into several foolscap sheets. You may wonder why I devote so much space all about this poem. I do so in order to justify the belief, which has always existed amongst some people, that there is many a genius in the fo'castle.

Ex.—Flour thrown upon burning paraffin will often put it out immediately.

THIRST.—You are not the first. Some long time ago, a scientist recommended that all the life-boats carried by ships should be provided with a bottle of citric acid, which precipitates chloride of sodium, and converts sea-water into a palatable drink.

AGHAST has heard of the existence, somewhere on this troubled planet, of a "person who is absolutely proof against fire. Can such things be?" asks AGHAST, in horrified small text. Undeterred by the somewhat vague character of the information given by my correspondent, I have laboriously run to earth some details of this marvellous personage. She is an American and lives in St. Louis. She declares that no fire can burn her and offers to back up her assertion by scientific tests, which, however, have not yet been applied, though it seems that men and women who have witnessed her experiments are prepared to testify to her fireproof capacity. It appears that fire will not burn anything so long as she touches it, in proof of which her adherents tell of some racehorses which were rescued by her from a burning stable. Some nasty sceptical people tell about buckets of cold water thrown over the horses as they were led out of their stalls, but there is always someone to throw buckets of cold water on the most veracious history. The lady weighs about seventeen stone, so her story should carry some weight.

C.—The first day of April and the first day of July always fall on the same day of the week.

GERTRUDE is in a quandary of the heart. She is loved by, and to a certain extent in love with, two parties of the clumsier sex, one of whom is as beautiful as a young Greek god, but does not appear to have any other very striking qualities, while the other is—well, "homely," although she believes he is a sterling good sort and intellectually far outshines his handsome rival. GERTRUDE can marry either of them when she likes, but doesn't know which to choose.

Now we are a gruff and grim old fogey and we don't put much faith in generalities given without a thorough knowledge of the facts governing the particular case in question. But I think I may safely advise you to marry the ugly one and thank your lucky stars you wrote us about it. It is a fact that, leaving out a few exceptional cases, your radiantly beautiful man is a pretty useless sort of party; for one thing, he gets too conceited to admit of his finding out where he has room for improvement, which is a very heavy drag for anyone to carry. The ugly man, on the other hand, faces a cold and even hostile world from the first; he, if at all sensitive, gets many wholesome rebuffs, many snubs and cold shoulders, which are bitter at the time, but bracing in their after-effects, for they throw him back on other and better qualities if he would make himself dear to those around him, the result being, in nine cases out of ten, a finer character than he might have grown up had he been better favoured.

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ELLAM.—Bradlee House is in Boston, U.S.A., but it has considerable interest for us from the fact that it is connected with the historic Tea Riots, which were the main cause of the loss of our American colonies. It was in the kitchen of that house that the leaders of the Boston Tea Party disguised themselves before going to the wharf to throw the cargoes of tea into the harbour. The house, which was built in 1771, is about to be pulled down.

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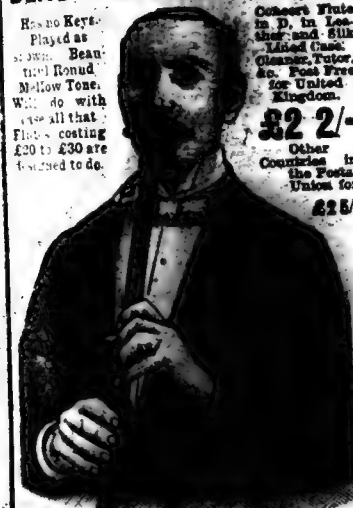
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We choose the shadow, but the sun
That casts it shines behind us still.

*And each good thought or action moves
the dark world nearer to the sun.*—WHITTIER.

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"Millais himself was occasionally induced to repeat the following anecdote, which is said by a personal friend of his: I found myself (said the late P.R.A.) seated one evening at a rather grand dinner, next to a very pretty girl, to whom I had not been introduced. She began conversation directly she had finished her soup, and was May began it with the inevitable question, 'Have you been to the Academy?' I replied that I had. 'Did you notice the Millais?' Didn't you think the awful daubs? I can't imagine how such things could be hung! She was going on gaily in the same strain. I sat silent, when suddenly the amused smiles faded around her and the significant hush brought her to a stop. She coloured rather painfully, and whispered in a frightened voice, 'For Heaven's sake, what have I said anything dreadful? Do tell me.' 'Not by a long way,' I replied. 'Eat your dinner in peace, and I'll tell you by and by.' She did so, rather miserably, vainly trying to get from me at intervals what the matter was, and when dessert came I filled up her glass with champagne, and she gulped it down very quickly when I counted to three. She obeyed without protest, and I took the opportunity she couldn't speak. I grasped her hand and said, 'Millais, let's be friends.'"



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And each good thought or action moves
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R



V. J. Jellie

"PEARSON'S WEEKLY" EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

CHRISTMAS, 1898.

PRICE SIXPENCE.



By BEATRICE HERON-MAXWELL

A MARBLE colonnade looked on to a terraced garden, where quaint and curiously-shaped beds of flowers, borrowed from Roman designs, lay under the blazing noontide sun, and in and out wound paths of softest turf bordered with box and rosemary.

The intense garish brightness outside emphasised the grateful coolness within the marble columns of the King's Palace, at Cæsarea, and scattered here and there, in varied attitudes of repose and idleness, were groups of maidens, whose murmuring voices, drowsy with the heat, made a pleasant lullaby for one who sat apart, and who was gradually drifting into slumber.

A scarf of deepest crimson, edged with heavy gold fringe, covered the marble balustrade on which she leant, and against it her head, pillowed on one arm, showed like an exquisite cameo on which the sculptor had expended all the perfection of his art, framing the face lovingly with clustering tendrils of hair, that broke away from a detaining band of ribbon to caress her brow and cheeks. Unlike the other maidens, her hair instead of being gathered into a knot, fell in free and bounteous waves over her shoulders, and was as different in colour as in fashion, for where the auburn masses caught the reflection of the sunlight they glittered like burnished gold.

Dark eyes, as purple as a velvet-petalled iris, were veiled by sweeping lashes black as night, and above them the arch of beautiful eyebrows, gave a touch of decision and power to a face almost too sweet in its loveliness.

The girl's figure, instinct with the grace of extreme youth, though free from all angles of immaturity, shewed its lithe and graceful curves through the loose folds of her *stola*; and where the flowing elbow sleeves fell away from the jewelled clasps that held them, her arms, round and dimpled, shone like polished ivory. Womanhood and childhood seemed to have met and merged in this matchless specimen of girlhood, wherein all their charms were blended into one harmonious whole, and added to these the refinement of bearing and expression that mark the heritage of noble birth; for Salome was not only the granddaughter of the great King Herod, but in her veins ran the blood of the Jewish High Priest, Simon the Boëthasian, whose daughter Marianne had been Herod's first wife.

And young as Salome was, there was yet a dignity about her that had until now preserved her from the careless admiration, the easy licentious flattery of her mother's Court, and which would have been provoked by the witchery of her dark eyes but for an indefinable sense of restraint, and atmosphere of purity surrounding her.

As she lay slumbering, some of her companions approached, and, seeing that she slept, continued the conversation that they had broken off, lowering their voices a little for fear of disturbing her.

"Herodias will never rest content until we hail her Queen," one of them said, a dark-tressed girl from Florence, called Itherna, "it is of that that she dreams unceasingly. It is not enough for her that Herod is Tetrarch of Galilee; she would have him called King as his father was; and to that end she urges him to go and make his appeal to Cæsar."

She ended her speech with a low contemptuous laugh, and Salome stirred restlessly, and, opening her eyes, gave an inquiring glance towards the speaker.

"That which is the will of Herodias, comes to pass sooner or later," answered another of the trio, Bernice; "I should not choose to be the one to say her nay. Only last night she was speaking of John, he whom they call the Baptist, and her words boded him no good."

"It is said that he spoke of her to Herod, is it not?" said Itherna, *All rights reserved.*

"and to the people also, stirring them up against her. He must be a brave man, and think little of keeping his head upon his shoulders."

She laughed musically.

"See, here is Salampsio," she resumed, "she is ever the bearer of news; perhaps she will have something of interest for us."

She pointed as she spoke to a girl who stood in one of the doorways leading from the Palace, holding back the purple velvet that draped it with one hand, while in the other she carried a basket of roses.

To anyone who had not known that she was the daughter of the freedman Sempronius, who kept the keys of the Palace at Cæsarea, her appearance would have caused a feeling of startled wonder and bewilderment.

For although her beauty lacked the exquisite freshness and budding charm of Salome, and the expression of her features suggested a maturity of mind beyond her years, she was, to all outward seeming, the very counterpart of the daughter of Herodias.

There were some who laughed to scorn the idea that so close a resemblance could be one of chance, and who said that Salampsio instead of being in attendance on Salome should take a place beside her as a grand-daughter of the great King; but the matter had never been of sufficient importance to raise any public question, the likeness had ceased to attract attention, and between the two girls themselves it had only served hitherto to form a bond of love and fellowship.

To a critical observer, the difference between them, almost imperceptible at first, would have demonstrated itself clearly, even in the few moments of Salampsio's approach through the colonnade; there was the same auburn hair, though it was braided round the head closely and woven into a coil in the centre; the same fair skin and violet eyes, but the light of innocence and goodness that dwelt in Salome's face was wanting, and the curl of the proud mouth held nothing of the sweetness lurking in Salome's lovely lips.

Salampsio, too, though she was of about the same height, did not possess the grace of movement that distinguished her mistress.

She stooped over Salome, and touching her lightly on the shoulder, placed the basket of flowers on the seat beside her. "From Philip of Trachonitis," she said briefly, and looked to see how Salome received them.

Salome opened her eyes, and looked gravely at the roses, then raised herself and looked inquiringly at Salampsio.

"He is here?" she asked.

"He is even now with Herodias," was the answer; "they bade me tell you so."

There was a certain veiled anxiety and discontent in her voice that did not escape the notice of Salome. She put the flowers gently aside.

"They are fragrant," she said, "but I do not desire them. Did my mother command me to go to her?"

"She said only that he was here."

"Then I need not go. Salampsio, there is something of which I would speak with you. Walk with me."

She put her arm on the younger girl's shoulder, and they moved slowly down the colonnade together.

The maidens, who had listened to this colloquy, looked at one another with a meaning smile.

"Philip!" said the Florentine, "he hath three times the years of Salome hath he not?"

To which Bernice shrugged her shoulders. "If it is the will of Herodias!" she answered conclusively.

Meanwhile Salome, in low and earnest tones, was conversing, not of Philip, but of John the Baptist.

"I must see him," she was saying. "Salampsio, make it possible for me. His face, that day when he passed through the crowd close to us, has haunted me; it was so calm, so noble, in the midst of all the tumult. Surely there can be no great wickedness in such a man as that. For what is he condemned?"

"For exciting the people to sedition," replied Salampsio; "and for preaching to them that this Gentile who claims to be the Messiah, is no deceiver, but speaks truth."

But Salome's eyes were still troubled. "They were saying—" she began, and hesitated. "I have heard that he spoke evil of my mother. Is this so?"

"It is so."

"And that she is desirous of his death?"

Salampsio did not answer.

"I would see him," said Salome, "take me to him."

But Salampsio shook her head.

"He is at the castle by Macherus, a prisoner," she said; "it would be impossible to go there without the consent of Herodias, and that will be difficult to gain."

Salome bent her brow in thought.

"Nevertheless I must gain it," she murmured. "I can never rest until I have spoken to him."

She was interrupted by the approach of Herodias through the garden towards them, accompanied by her husband's half-brother, Philip the Tetrarch of Trachonitis.

She made an imperious gesture of command to Salome to come to them, and seated herself under the shade of some cypress trees that formed a background for a canopied couch, hung with violet silk.

Having disposed herself negligently on this, she signed to Philip to place himself beside her, but he was leaning against the marble column of a statue, and did not perceive her invitation, his eyes being fixed on the two girls who slowly came towards them.

A frown clouded her brow; she was accustomed to be obeyed in the lightest as well as the greatest matter; but she kept silence, and contented herself with watching the expression of his absorbed face. It was not often that any man who found himself in the company of Herodias was absent-minded or indifferent to her society. Both Herod Philip, her first husband, and Herod Antipas, her present one, had fallen easy victims to her dangerous fascination. Her beauty and her personality were of that order which demands recognition, and which, even if it may not always be admired, can never be ignored.

Heavy masses of dark brown hair were raised above her forehead in elaborate spiral coils, and ornamented by jewelled pins, forming a head-dress, that added to her height and dignity. Her eyes, brown also, but of a shade so dark that they looked black, were full of fire and brilliance, the long straight lashes that fringed them, and the level brows above, tending to impart an expression of immovable determination to their gaze.

Full lips almost too red in their contrast to her skin of creamy whiteness, held a world of passion and concentration in the firmness of their pressure, though when they smiled, and a dimple appeared in either cheek, her whole face was so marvellously softened, that one could understand the fascination that had gained for her the reputation of being the most beautiful, and the possibility of being the most unscrupulous woman, in Rome.

Her figure, notwithstanding a tendency to voluptuousness, was still admirable in its statuesque proportions, and her hand and foot were at once the delight and the despair of all the painters and sculptors of that period.

Her under-dress, of hyacinth-coloured embroidered linen, was surmounted by a tunic, the *palla* of Roman matronhood, in azure silk, covered with golden stars, of a texture so thin as to be semi-transparent, showing the gleam of white shoulders and arms through its filmy folds.

Round her neck hung a necklace of interlaced gold, adorned with rows of pendant pearls, whose value was priceless, so perfect were they in their shape and colour; and clasping one arm above the elbow were many jewelled bands, some in the form of serpents with immense ruby eyes.

Her shoes, of a brilliant purple, were ornamented over the arched instep with an embroidery of gold thread and pearls, and were fastened with golden laces.

In her hand she waved with languid grace a fan of peacock's feathers, the movement causing the rings with which her fingers were loaded to scintillate with rainbow flashes.

An imperial form, demonstrating in every attribute its demand for sovereignty!

The dark sternness of Philip's face, and the strength and symmetry of his figure pleased her well; she read intuitively in his eyes the attraction that her daughter's fairness had begun to hold for him, and resolved that no obstacle should interfere with their future union.

"The child is not without beauty," she murmured softly to him, "is she?"

He started, and turned his eyes from Salome to her.

"The child is a woman," he said quickly, "but she is strangely favoured by her waiting-maid. I did not know the likeness was so marked until now I see them together. They might either of them be Salome, if it were not for the dress."

Herodias looked for an instant scornfully at them.

"Yes, there is a strong resemblance," she said; "such things are not

uncommon in Rome. Sempronius thinks he is much favoured by the gods, inasmuch as his daughter is not of the plebeian type; he is philosophical."

She put aside the matter lightly as she always did, and when Salome reached them dismissed Salampsio with a haughty word of command.

The flash of the girl's eyes, as she turned away, was lost on Herodias, and in any case would not have interested her.

"Salome," she said, "here is thy kinsman, Philip Herod. He brings us news from Rome, whither he has just come. If thou hast aught to ask about thy playmates there, he is ready to furnish thee with information. Presently he will sup with the King; till then thou canst amuse him with thy chatter."

She rose leisurely to go, but Salome laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"Mother," she said, in a low voice, "I have a request to make of thee. Wilt thou stay now and hear it?"

"Speak on," answered Herodias, with some slight impatience. "What is it takes thy wayward fancy now, Salome?"

"I would see John, the man who preached on the city wall, the day of the tumult."

Herodias' face was suffused for an instant with the flush of sudden resentment.

"The Jewish demagogue!" she exclaimed, "the sedition-monger! hath he stirred you up to rebellion also, girl?"

Salome touched her mother's face caressingly.

"No, no," she said, "but I have heard much about him lately, and I would speak with him. He hath a good face, mother; perchance we are mistaken in him, or perchance if he were reasoned with he might give up his preaching. The remembrance of his face comes to me in my dreams and troubles me. Let me see him."

She spoke with restrained vehemence, and her lovely eyes filled with tears when her mother shook off her hand and turned away.

"What is that she desires?" asked Philip persuasively, "may I not plead for her?"

But Herodias' face was dark with wrath.

"She would speak with a man who is in prison, a corrupt and lying Jew, who has given much trouble in the city of late, and has dared to lay even the King himself under condemnation."

"The man John, who baptises with water," said Philip suavely. "I have heard of him, and that his words did not do justice to your charms, Herodias." His tone had the faintest tinge of mockery in it, but, before she had time to answer him, he continued: "It might be that Salome could win him to her way of thinking; it would go hard with any man to resist the argument of such lips and eyes."

The impassioned glance he directed to the young girl as he spoke betrayed feelings that were scarcely under control.

The brow of Herodias cleared, and she smiled graciously at him.

"Thy eloquence is convincing, Philip," she said. "Perhaps thou canst teach Salome to be as eloquent. If so, I will not forbid what she asks."

She gave him a significant glance emphasising her stipulation, and walked away with stately steps to the Palace, bidding some of the maidens as she passed carry fans to Philip and Salome.

"Why dost thou desire so greatly to talk with this man?" said Philip, taking her hand and leading her to the cushioned seat beneath the statue. "What is there in common between thy youth and sweetness and a malefactor?"

Salome raised her eyes gravely to his.

"I cannot tell," she answered, "but I have thought of him often, and I feel as if something drew me to him against even my will. His face, although it is so wild and strange, has more goodness in it than any I have ever seen. I should like to hear him preach, and to learn how it is he draws all the people to him, so that the multitudes will do his bidding when no one else can move them."

"I misdoubt me he is a mischievous fellow," said Philip, "and thou wouldst be best away from him. But since it was thy wish, fair Salome, I pleaded for thee, and if thou wilt accept me as advocate I think I can obtain the boon thou cravest."

He ventured to lean towards her and to take her hand, but Salome, with a swift upward glance at him, drew it away, and, merely thanking him in formal accents for his partisanship, called to some of the maidens to come nearer, and feigned to be unconscious of the ardour that made him long to speak with her alone, to win her from her coldness, and teach this lovely innocent child the power that she possessed.

But there was one who was not unconscious of this love that had taken possession of him, and who, watching from afar with eyes that flamed with grief and jealousy, could have found it in her heart almost to hate her involuntary rival, who had gained without an effort the love she coveted from the first moment that she saw Philip.

Far above her as he was, and devoid of any attempt as yet to captivate her fancy, Salampsio had learnt in Rome, the previous year, to give him a worship as deep as it was undeserved and unsuspected.

She drew from the folds of her tunic a white rose, taken from the basket he had sent by her to Salome, and pressed it to her lips, murmuring as she watched him finally withdraw from the garden: "If thou hadst prospered in thy wooing then had Salampsio died. But thy discomfiture is life to her."

And then she wept at the omen, for the snowy petals, loosened by her caress, fell in a shower at her feet, and presaged the decay of love and hope.

Some days had passed since Philip came first to Cæsarea, and though his suit had not prospered, Herodias still detained him at the Palace and promised him success.

There were many troublous rumours floating in the air, and the Tetrarch of Galilee was ill at ease, though he concealed his forebodings under a front of assumed haughty indifference.

It was said that Aretas, King of Arabia Petraea, the father of Herod's first wife, wroth with him for having taken Herodias in her place, was making ready for war upon him, and would presently march into Judaea with a large force.

Report whispered also that Cæsar himself was not well pleased with Herodias, and that if Herod approached the Emperor at this time he would be but coldly received.

Herodias herself, proudly contemptuous on both these heads, was perturbed about her favourite brother, Agrippa, afterwards named the Great, who had been forbidden to come into the presence of Tiberius, because his former friendship with the Emperor's dead son evoked sad memories, and who, as a result of inordinate extravagance, was unable to live longer in Rome, being in fact penniless.

He had retired to Idumea, and hidden there from his creditors, threatened to kill himself, but was saved by the intervention of his wife, who sent messages to Herodias intreating help.

Herodias persuaded Herod to allot him a magistracy at Tiberias, and a sufficient income, but this favour did not establish her any the more firmly in the good graces of her husband, who was growing weary of her peremptory demands, and the many troubles she entailed on him.

Wherefore the atmosphere of the Palace was one of strife and discontent, and it was not improved by the presence of John the Baptist, for whom Herodias had sent in accordance with the wish of Salome, supported by Philip, and who was a new element of discord between them all.

For John, in his steadfast, fearless righteousness, could not be won by blandishments to unsay his condemnation of Herodias, and she began to fear greatly that he would not only set the people against her but the Tetrarch himself.

There had been a tumult when John was known to be in the Palace, and the Jews had assembled and clamoured at the gates for his release; a tumult that would scarcely have ended without bloodshed had it not been for John himself, who, hearing of it, offered to speak to the multitude from a balcony if his guards would conduct him thither, and to send them away soothed and quieted.

More than once Salome had visited him in his captivity, and had listened eagerly to the words he spoke to her as though some magnetic influence commanded her belief in them and him.

Truly she might have said in the words of Agrippa to Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

And Philip, knowing this, and that there was danger of her conversion to John's doctrines, yet was not averse to the thought, since any division of opinion between her and her mother might serve him in good stead, and incline her towards himself and freedom.

And, again, in this matter there was another influence at work, though none knew that Salampsio was watching every word and glance, counting every hour that kept Philip of Trachonitis near her, yet brought him no nearer to Salome.

It chanced one day that Salome, weary of sad thoughts, and feeling the gaiety natural to her youth, danced with some maidens of her own age within the myrtle grove of the Palace garden, and presently when they were tired and cast themselves down on the mossy bank to rest, she continued the dance by herself, unaware that Herodias and Philip passing by in earnest converse were her unseen spectators.

If he had not already set his whole heart on the acquisition of Salome for his wife, assuredly the sight of her dancing would have inspired him with keenest admiration and delight.

A bird, fluttering its wings with joy in the sunny ether, a flower, swaying with subtle fragrance in the evening breeze, could not have illustrated more exquisitely the grace and poetry of vivacious youth. To and fro she flitted, her white draperies floating round her, her small sandalled feet appearing scarcely to touch the ground, while a shower of sweet blossom petals falling on her from the trees above seemed to salute her queen of flowers. Philip stopped, and parting the branches that half screened her from them, gazed with unfeigned rapture, sighing as he recalled how little progress he had made in her regard hitherto.

Herodias smiled, and drew him on saying softly: "Thou hast no reason for despair, Philip. Those petals falling round her were safe on the boughs above but now; she will fall into thy hands with the first breeze that stirs her wilful heart. Thou lackest patience."

His face was gloomy in spite of her words, and when they had passed out of earshot of the maidens, he said sullenly: "Mine may not be the hand into which the blossom falls! Methinks this partiality of hers, for this John, the Preacher, is strange, and hath more reason in it than we dreamed. It was only this morning that after she had spoken with him in

his cell, she wept sorely; and later, when I would have spoken with him, she was there again. She passed me in the doorway as I entered, and drew her veil closely round her so that I should not see her face. John, too, seemed strangely troubled and intreated of me to speak to Herod, that he should either be released, or sent back to Macherus. I like it not, Herodias."

He turned to her for answer, and was startled at the effect his words had produced.

Her eyes were blazing with passion, her teeth were set stormily upon her full underlip; her face had become even paler, as was its wont, when some strong feeling moved her.

For had not she herself striven to win the Baptist to her side, by the exercise of all the wiles and artifices in which she was proficient, and had not her absolute and ignominious failure filled her heart with a burning fire of revenge, unquenchable save by a baptism of blood.

For a moment she did not speak, then in concentrated hissing tones she exclaimed: "So, he has scorned her also. If this be so, he hath given a weapon into my hands."

And abruptly she left him.

Philip stood looking after her with surprise, and musing upon the full meaning of her words, and after a time would have followed her, but that someone softly called his name from a terraced walk, hidden from view by a wall of close-cut cedar trees trimmed to the form of battlements, with here and there a pennon of foliage as though a standard floated from them.

Turning into this path, he thought at first Salome had bidden him, but, on a nearer approach, found that the white-robed form was that of Salampsio, though this was demonstrated more by the fashion of her dress and hair than by any other outward tokens to his sight.

His face showed the surprise he felt that this girl should venture to call him to her side, and he would have turned to go, but that she said quietly: "It is of Salome I would speak, my lord Philip."

His glance, as he stayed his footsteps, spoke his inquiry.

"There is no room in her heart for any but him of whom you know," she went on steadily; "she dreams of him by night, she thinks of him by day. And he is a just man, who cares not for the things of this world. This very day she hath confessed her love to him, and he hath rejected it with words of wrath and admonition."

Philip's swarthy face flamed and darkened, while an oath rose to his lips.

"He hath dared—" he began, but she interrupted him. "Blame him not; he doth not ask for love; he liveth only to call those whom he thinketh sinners to repentance. But if Salome could be brought to think evil of him; if she could be persuaded that he hath betrayed her appeal to him; hath spoken of it with slighting mockery—"

She paused. The soft colour flushing in her cheek, the eager light in her eye, made her so beautiful that Philip found himself kindling with admiration towards her, and feeling as though Salome herself were thus

earnestly teaching him how to gain his suit.

He caught Salampsio's hand in his. It was as small and well-shaped as the one he coveted; the maiden shyness with which she turned away from him, though not before he had read the love-light in her eyes, seemed like the substance of the shadow he was pursuing in vain.

"And if she could be taught to hate him, what then?" he said, though his thoughts of the absent Salome were divided as he spoke.

Salampsio's cheek was dyed a deeper rose.

"Then," she answered, hesitating, "then perhaps she would learn to return the love my lord wastes on her now."

Her fingers were thrilling to his touch; he could discern the hurried beating of her heart under the light folds of her tunic.

Truly, if Salome were the loveliest maiden in the world, there was at least one other who could challenge her perfection, and one whose mood was more propitiatory to love's demands.

"And when this is so what of Salampsio?" he asked.

She raised eyes to his in whose violet depths some tumultuous feeling stirred.

"Salampsio's happiness is in my lord's," she answered tremulously.

Proud as he was, and overbearing, as indeed were most of the Herodian family, he was yet gratified by the spontaneous devotion of this maiden, whose beauty excelled all that he had ever seen with one exception.

"Hast thou no lover who seeks his happiness in thine and thine in his?" he asked imperiously.

Salampsio drooped her eyelids. "None, my lord, at least none whom I favour. To me they are all as dust. I would wed none of them."

Her tone was as arrogant as his own could have been; she looked patrician in her pride and scorn.



Watching from afar with eyes that flamed with grief and jealousy.

"Thou would'st wed above thy sphere; is that so?" said Philip, bending nearer to her, and speaking half in tenderness, half in mockery.

"Or not at all," she flashed out at him, and freeing her hand from his clasp, sped a few paces away. But he pursued her and caught her in his arms, turning her face to meet his own.

"Almost could I believe that there were two Salomes, and that thou wert the one I desired most," he said; "there is some sorcery about thee that is not easily withstood. Hast thou told aught of this to Herodias?"

"Not yet," she answered, "but if I tell her, then will her hate be redoubled against John, and she will contrive a new plot to have him slain. Then will the way be clear at last for thee, Philip."

He looked at her for a moment in silence, while a struggle went on in his mind; then drawing her nearer to him: "This for thy plot, Salampsio," he said, "and this for thyself," and kissed her twice. Then he strode quickly away to find Herodias.

It was the Tetrarch's birthday, and in spite of many presents and much fulsome compliment from those frequenters of the Palace who were highest in his estimation there was a cloud upon his face, and he was in a dark mood. In vain had Herodias striven to charm away his gloom; he had turned from her with petulance, and she, attributing his caprice to the adverse influence of John, had mentally sworn to contrive the downfall of this, her greatest enemy in Judaea.

To which end she had sent for Salampsio to her own apartment, and they had held long and close conference together.

Therefore when Herodias heard that Herod was silent and sullen at the birthday feast that night, to which all the chief Jews and Romans had been bidden, and would yield to no efforts for his distraction and amusement, she sent a message to him to say that she would come to him in the banquetting hall, and would, by his leave, bring with her some dancers for his diversion.

As she swept into the hall, magnificent in trailing white robes, bordered with deep purple and gold, with a circlet of gems surrounding the pyramid of hair above her brow, and jewels blazing on her neck and arms and hands, she looked, indeed, an empress, and all those who sat at meat with Herod rose and made deep obeisance to her, compelled thereto by her arrogance and beauty.

The banquet had but recently been concluded, and the dessert, of many rare fruits, sent from afar, and wine, in vessels of iridescent glass, and jewelled chalices, still remained upon the tables, round which on couches reclined the guests.

Garlands of roses, hung in profusion everywhere, filling the hall with odorous fragrance, and countless beautiful lamps shed a brilliant light around, while through the open windows the terraces and gardens beyond, illuminated by the silver radiance of the moon, formed an enchanting vista.

Following Herodias came a band of maidens, clothed in scantiest



The Tetrarch himself still remained unmoved.

garments of red and yellow, their heads and forms adorned with wreaths and clusters of damask and golden roses, and holding gauzy scarves of glittering tinsel, who, after making their salutations to the assembly, commenced to dance.

The company looked on well pleased at their evolutions, and many

were the exclamations of approval and pleasure that followed the conclusion of their performance, while, as they passed round the hall, some of the guests threw flowers and sweetmeats to them, others taking off their rings and chains to present to those whose dancing had pleased them most.

But the Tetrarch himself still remained unmoved, heavily brooding with a frown on his brow, and vouchsafed no word of commendation.

Herodias turned and gave a whispered order to one of the attendants behind her, then, with her most winning smile, and laying one hand tenderly on his arm, she said:

"Dear, my lord, there is yet one dancer whom I would have you see. I would do all honour to your birthday, Herod, wherefore I have reserved unto the last a rare enjoyment, and one that I would not accord save for thy pleasure on this night."

As she spoke, a band of maidens, bearing stringed instruments, entered at the far end of the hall, and began to play soft music, and a moment afterwards a girl's white-clad figure came with faltering footsteps towards Herodias, while a sweet, trembling voice said: "Mother, what wouldst thou with me?"

The Tetrarch looked up in astonishment, and there was a murmur of mingled surprise and admiration amongst the guests, while Philip, springing to his feet, exclaimed: "Salome!"

Herodias turned a glance of reproof on him, and said in clear, measured accents: "My daughter, thou hast danced oftentimes for thine own pleasure; I would now that thou should'st dance for the King's" (for so she loved to call him).

Salome stood as though turned to stone, and in the silence which followed, every heart beat more quickly with the amazement, not only at her sudden appearance as a dancer—a profession held in no repute, and never adopted by ladies of quality—but at her ethereal and exquisite loveliness. Save for the glowing colour of her hair, that made a sunset aureole round her head, the scarlet of her lips, and the darkness of her starry eyes, she might have been a statue, so purely white was the pallor of her face, matching the roses nestling at her breast, so dazzling in their alabaster the arms that held a snowy scarf round her slender figure.

White also were the draperies that fell in such harmonious folds to her sandalled feet. She might have been the sculptured impersonation of some goddess of love and beauty, to whom the hue and softness of life had by some sudden miracle been imparted.

She lifted her eyes to her mother's in an unspoken appeal, but Herodias made an imperious gesture in reply, and after a momentary hesitation, betokening an inward conflict between her own diffidence and her fear of her mother's wrath, she began slowly and rhythmically to sway and step lightly to and fro. The music, languorous and dreamy, rose and fell as though Æolian harps were breathed upon by spirit zephyrs from afar, and following its cadences, their harmony and subtle sweetness, expressed in every graceful movement, Salome circled round the centre of the hall, the ends of her scarf, like pinions floating behind her, and giving her the appearance of a winged angel.

Presently the music swelled louder and louder, and as the measure grew more stirring, Salome, forgetful now of aught but her art, drew the scarf from her shoulders, and waving it in her hands, danced in strange wild barbaric steps that stirred the dormant senses, and taking them captive, carried them with her to a delirious exhilaration that bordered on frenzy.

Her wonderful hair, loosed from the fillets that bound it, fell round her



Salome circled round the centre of the hall.

alike rain of tawny gold, her lips were parted as in an ecstasy, her eyes gleamed like jewels; all the fire of youth and love seemed imprisoned in that slender, supple form; she looked the incarnate spirit of joyous, riotous, palpitating life.

Then, with almost imperceptible gradations, the strains of melody softened and slackened; now insistent, now melting, as though Love wooing Life were first repulsed and then allured, until at last, with one subdued prolonged chord of conquering sweetness, she sank gently into a half-reclining attitude, her arms raised as though in invitation, the scarf floating over her face and hair like a veil, the roses at her breast showering their petals like a cloud of white butterflies round her.

There was a hush after the music died away into silence, as though the tension of feeling was too great to allow of speech; then Herod's voice broke the stillness, followed by a murmur of applause from everyone.

"Verily," he exclaimed, "she hath bewitched me; I have never seen a fairer sight than that. Salome hath dispelled the spirit of evil that possessed me, and hath given me back the joy of life. Let her ask what she will in return. It shall be hers even unto the half of my possessions."

His eyes flashed, with excitement, the red colour mounted to his forehead; he raised himself on his seat, and extended his hand to Salome in commanding invitation to her to approach.

Herodias smiled, well pleased, with difficulty restraining any other outward expression of the triumph that filled her soul.

She bent forward, and, beckoning Salome to a seat beside her, whispered long and earnestly in her ear. At first, her pleadings and her commands were alike useless; Salome would have withdrawn from her in horror, but her mother clasped her arm, and spoke again in hurried eager murmurs.

"He hath maligned thee, Salome," she reiterated, "I tell thee he hath spoken to Philip and others of thee with scornful jest and mockery. Even now the whole Palace is whispering of thy repulse by John, the prisoner. He sweareth that thou hast spoken to him of love; he hath demanded to be sent back to Macherus or that thou should'st be restrained from seeking his presence. If thou believest me not, ask Philip if this is truth. Have I not always told thee that John was a base and evil slanderer?"

She signed to Philip to come to them, and drawing the two apart, demanded from him corroboration of her words.

Philip endorsed them briefly and emphatically; he had seen John but that afternoon, had asked him whether this thing was true of Salome, and John had acknowledged that it was.

Salome's eyes burnt with a sombre fire of pain and anger. Her face was livid; even her lips, lately so crimson, had paled with the intensity of her feeling, her hands were clenched; her breast heaved with emotion.

Never had she looked less beautiful than at this moment; even Philip, recoiled, startled at the change in her face, produced by the struggle of two natures within her; one her own, gentle and good, but outraged by a sense of supreme wrong, the other inherited from her mother, and from the great King, her grandfather, whose lust of slaughter drove him to slay his wife, his sons, and many of his kindred who had once been dear to him.

She turned to her mother, and said in a low, rapid voice: "As thou wilt, and his blood be on his own head."

Then with a quick movement, like that of a snake when it springs, she cast herself down at the Tetrarch's feet.

"A boon," she cried. "O, Herod, I claim thy promise!"

He leant forward, and placed his hand caressingly on her hair.

"To the half of my kingdom, Salome," he answered.

"The head of John the Baptist on a charger."

The words, spoken with breathless intensity, seemed to sting Herod like the lash of a scourge.

He would have started up, but she clasped his knees. "Thy promise," she said loudly and firmly.

Herod sank back.

He had pledged his word. To break it was to bring shame and dishonour not on himself alone, but on those that sat at meat with him—it was impossible. With a heavy sigh he covered his face with his hand, and then as Salome repeated: "Thy promise," he made a signal for one of the servants to come near.

"Send hither the Captain of the Guard," he said.

Salome rose, and took the place beside her mother, while all present gazed in astonishment, not unmingled with horror, at this girl, in whose slight form, beauty and blood-thirstiness seemed so strangely combined.

And some of them, being Jews who favoured John, arose and went out; for since they were powerless to stay the command of the Tetrarch, they would not witness an act of which they disapproved.

The Captain of the Guard entered, received his orders, and departed.

And again a deep silence reigned in the banqueting hall, for the space of a quarter of an hour.

Then came the sound of returning footsteps; the door at the end of the

hall was flung open by two soldiers, and the Captain of the Guard advanced and saluted the Tetrarch.

Behind him, walked a soldier, carrying a large metal charger on which a cloth had been laid, and resting in its folds, the newly decapitated head of the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ.

The Tetrarch uncovering his eyes in which remorse and sorrow gleamed, made a gesture of dismissal to the Captain, and of command to the soldier, who, kneeling at Salome's feet, proffered her his terrible burden.

With shrinking gaze, Salome looked down; saw the anguished face, distorted still with the shock of violent death, the ensanguined lips and eyes and throat, the crimson folds bathed in the life-blood of an innocent man; then, with an effort, she grasped the charger, and placed it on her mother's knees.

Her lips moved, but no sound issued from them. And Herodias, terrible in her implacable vengeance, smiled at its fulfilment.

Then Salome went straight out from their presence, and to her own room, where, with one long, exceeding bitter cry, she fell senseless, the blood gushing from her lips, and the maidens, gathering round her, thought her dead!

For many days Salome lay at the gates of death, and none, saving Salampsio, could venture to be near her; for after her consciousness returned to her, sleep would not visit her, and ever by night and day, she raved of John, and of the blood that stained her hands, and would have destroyed herself had it been possible.

Again and again she danced her fatal dance; again in fancy she knelt at Herod's feet and claimed her gift, and then with a terrible cry, she would shriek that she saw John, and that his eyes were piercing her, while her hands were dyed with his blood.

But most of all she shunned her mother, and would scarcely hear her name spoken.

And Salampsio tended her with every care, and this not for Philip's sake, but because Herodias said to her: "If Salome die, the Jews will say it is the vengeance of God because of the death of John; and the King himself, who is grievously distraught, will believe it also. Therefore it will be well for thee if she should live."

And this she said with a threatening look; for she had discovered Salampsio's secret love for Philip, and, if Salome died, then would she tell Philip of their plot.

For Salampsio it was, who, impersonating Salome, had approached John with words of love, and he had believed it was Salome's self who did so; wherefore he had not denied it when Philip asked of him the truth.

And this Salampsio had done, by order of Herodias, and in the hope of killing Philip's love for Salome when he should hear her evil spoken of; though to Philip himself she had pretended that she was concerned in the matter only for his happiness. So, after some days, Herodias sent a message to Salome to bid her make ready to wed Philip, for that it was necessary in order to silence the outcry of the people, or they would believe that Salome felt remorse at the thing which she had done. And at this Salome despaired greatly, for she hated Philip. And Salampsio

despaired also, for she saw that Philip would soon be lost to her.

Wherefore, on the eve of the day fixed for the wedding, she confessed all to Salome, telling her that she had caused the death of John unjustly, and that he had believed the truth of what he said.

But nevertheless, on the morrow, the wedding was solemnised with much pomp and state, and Philip departed with his bride to Trachonitis.

Now, whether Salome, in her unavailing repentance, came to such a strait of despair that she cared not what happened to her, and so yielded to her mother's will; or whether she died, slain by her remorse when she learnt the truth, and Herodias substituted Salampsio, in her stead to wed with Philip, it is not possible to say.

History tells us only that Salome married Philip first, and afterwards, at his death, Aristobulus, King of Chalcis; but that her life was not one of happiness and peace, and her end was sudden and violent.

And on the wedding day of Philip it was given out in the Palace that Salampsio, the daughter of Sempronius, was dead of swift fever; and, while some said she fell ill through nursing Salome in her delirium, and others that she destroyed herself for love of Philip, others, again (though these were few, and dared not say it openly), averred in secret that it was Salome who died of remorse, and that Salampsio, at the command of Herodias, took her place, and was married to Philip. But be this as it may, the youth and happiness of both Salome and Salampsio died that night with John.

And of Herodias and Herod we know that their prosperity did not endure, and that from the moment of John's death their troubles waxed greater.

And, after a time, being jealous of Agrippa, to whom the new Emperor Caius had given the Tetrarchy of Philip, together with that of Lysanius, and the title and privileges of King, they journeyed to Rome, where, being ill-received by Cæsar, they ended in disgrace and banishment, and died in obscure poverty at Lyons, in Gaul.



With an effort she grasped the charger.

Queen



Necklace

By BARONESS EMMUSKA ORCZY.

"Do I understand, M. Durand, that you can undertake to make me a necklet, in imitation diamonds, so exactly similar to the original one I have shown you, that no one but an expert could possibly tell the difference?"

The well-known figure of Yussuf III., ex-King of Transbalkania, was leaning across the counter of Durand's shop in the Place du Palais Royal. The jeweller, polite, obsequious, much flattered at his exalted customer,

was listening attentively to the directions his Majesty was giving him.

"I can stake my reputation, your Majesty, that, unless the stones were taken out of their settings, not even an expert could tell them from the originals."

"The only difficulty, as far as I can see," said his ex-Majesty, "is the time that the imitation necklet will take to manufacture; I cannot possibly part from the original for more than a couple of hours."

"My people invariably work from photographs, which I take myself," replied the jeweller; "your Majesty need not, therefore, have this valuable necklet out of your



The jeweller, polite, obsequious, was listening attentively to the directions his Majesty was giving him.

hands for one instant. If your Majesty will deign to step up to my studio now, I can take all the negatives I require in half-an-hour, and need not trouble your Majesty any further after that."

"You are a pearl among jewellers, Durand. I shall have to give you a decoration, or create you Count of the Transbalkanian Empire," said the King, as he followed M. Durand up the narrow stairs that led to the photographic studio.

"The price of the necklet will be 10,000 francs," remarked the jeweller, somewhat drily, as he opened the studio door and made way for his Majesty Yussuf III.

"Cunning old rascal!" laughed the King, not the least shocked at Durand's remark; "you shall be paid, never fear—some money in advance if you like."

M. Durand, once more obsequiousness itself, proceeded to take the necessary photographs and impressions of the necklet. It was a beautiful ornament, consisting of five rows of solitaire diamonds, some of which were of enormous size; but what rendered the *collier* absolutely unique was that each alternate diamond was a black one, and of almost priceless value.

No doubt M. Durand, while busying himself with his photographic apparatus, was puzzling in his mind what his Majesty's object could be in having the jewel imitated, but, like all Parisian tradesmen, he kept his own counsel, and never once appeared astonished.

"That is all I require, your Majesty," said M. Durand, when he had finished. "In less than a fortnight I hope to place before your Majesty's eyes an exact counterpart of the necklet it has been my good fortune to hold in my hand, and I will guarantee that your Majesty's surprise at the result shall be absolutely boundless."

King Yussuf III., highly gratified, bestowed a parting condescending

nod on the jeweller and re-entered his carriage, apparently in the highest spirits.

There is no doubt that if the bad taste of a nation will drive its ruling sovereign from his throne and force him into exile, Paris is the place where such exile becomes not only possible but really enjoyable. Yussuf III. had found it particularly so; he had become the victim of one of the numerous revolutions that at times shake the equanimity of the Transbalkanian kingdom, and his people had asked him, with more urgency than politeness, to quit his capital, Yiddiz, as they wished to try some other form of government.

King Yussuf III., with his wife and infant son, and as much money as he could manage to lay his hands on, crossed the frontier, and having bought a palace in Paris, close to the Parc Monceau, forgot Yiddiz and the glories of the Transbalkanian throne for the sake of the Bois de Boulogne and the races at Longchamps. As for Queen Mathilde, she bore her altered circumstances nobly. Very soon she reigned over Parisian society, a sovereignty that she found vastly more to her taste than the one she had exercised over her uncouth, ill-bred, and uneducated subjects in Transbalkania. Her toilettes were the talk of Paris, her balls rivalled those of the Elysée, and her beauty turned the heads and subjugated the hearts of the inflammable Parisians.

One morning, about three weeks after the visit of Yussuf III. to M. Durand's shop, her Majesty Queen Mathilde, usually calmness and dignity itself, was pacing up and down her boudoir in a state of the greatest agitation; she seemed quite unable to sit still, and every five minutes she rang the bell and asked whether M. Cartouche had arrived at the palace.

Evidently something very serious had happened, and when M. Cartouche did at last arrive, her Majesty seemed almost unable, through overpowering emotion, to tell him why she had sent for him. M. Cartouche's duties in the Royal household were varied and numerous, conferring a great deal of honour and importance on his little person; but none of these duties being very lucrative, he had some

others, private ones, that were more so—namely, the part ownership of a snug little business in the Rue de Clichy, known as "a private inquiry office and detective agency," for the use of persons desiring the investigation of matters with which they would rather not trouble the police or their family solicitor. This business M. Cartouche, in connection with his partner, M. Ratichon, conducted with great profit to himself and great benefit to the Parisian public.

"M. Cartouche," said Queen Mathilde, who had now mastered her agitation, "I shall require your services immediately and exclusively for a



M. Cartouche assumed a most important air.

most vital and delicate matter. You must know that when his Majesty and I were infamously forced to quit our kingdom, I succeeded in bringing away with me the greater part of the Transbalkanian regalia. My motive was one that every loyal person would approve. The self-constituted president of the new Transbalkanian republic might live in our palace, sit upon our throne; but I swore that he should never wear the jewelled crown of our Kings, and I specially vowed that his wife should never have round her neck the priceless necklace of black diamonds that has adorned the Queens of Transbalkania for five hundred years."

M. Cartouche was beginning to feel that the secrets of nations were about to be intrusted to his keeping; he assumed a most important air, and bowed gravely, waiting for her Majesty to resume.

"Last night, about midnight," said the Queen, after a slight pause, "I was standing by this open window that overlooks the park; the black diamond necklace was in my hand. Suddenly, and before I was able, from sheer terror, to utter a scream, two men in cloaks and masks sprang into the room, threw a hood over my face, dealt me a blow that rendered me senseless, snatched my necklet out of my hand, and disappeared in the darkness before I had time to recover consciousness."

"Did your Majesty immediately summon the police?" asked Cartouche breathlessly.

"No," said the Queen, "for here is my difficulty. The present Transbalkanian Government, though they suspected me of having the Crown jewels in my possession, have never had any actual proof of the fact. If I now set the French police on the track of the thieves, the whole affair would get so much publicity that, when I ultimately recover the necklet, I probably should be forced to give it up again together with the crown and the rest of the regalia, to the Transbalkanian Government. Now, Cartouche, you know the facts of the case; look at this drawing," added the Queen, taking a paper from her desk, "it is a most faithful portrait of the stolen necklet; as you see, it is composed of five rows of solitaires, each alternate diamond being a black one. No one else in Europe possesses black diamonds this size, they should therefore be easy to trace."

"No doubt, your Majesty," said Cartouche with an air of the greatest importance; "the moment any of these stones are thrown on the market they will be easy enough to trace; but the question is, will the thief ever dare to do this in Europe? In all probability he will take his spoil across to America or Australia."

"That is for you to find out, M. Cartouche," said the Queen, "you know your business, and I do not. What I want is that necklet back again, even if I have to spend half my fortune in getting it. As for the thief, as far as I am concerned, he shall be let off scot free: his silence is worth more to me than his punishment."

Her Majesty thereupon nodded to Cartouche, who understood that he was dismissed; he folded the precious drawing, placing it in his breast pocket, and was about to take his leave, when he paused one moment and said:

"There is but one little thing against which I will, if I may be so bold, venture to warn your Majesty," and, sinking his voice to a whisper, he added: "In my absence do not consult Ratichon; he is an honest fellow, but weak in the head, very."

Having relieved his mind, M. Cartouche bowed very low and left the palace a prouder and more important personage than he had ever been.

Whilst M. Cartouche was thus engaged in hearing the confidences of Queen Mathilde, his partner, M. Ratichon, was receiving a no less exalted visitor. Shortly after Cartouche had gone out an elegant brougham stopped outside the house in the Rue de Clichy that bore the sign "Cartouche & Ratichon, Private Detective and Inquiry Office," and his ex-Majesty the King of Transbalkania, having been told by the porter that M. Cartouche was out, was shown into the private office of M. Ratichon.

The latter was a jovial, stout, little man, with hair brushed straight up from his forehead, which gave him the appearance of a bottle brush. His hands were very fat, with dimples in them, and he was always rubbing them against each other, when pleased or agitated. He jumped up in the greatest excitement, when he recognised his august visitor, and stood, smiling and rubbing his hands, while the King was evidently somewhat embarrassed to explain the reason of this extraordinary condescension.

"M. Ratichon," said he, at last, very abruptly, "I have come to consult you on a very important matter, which will require all your skill and delicacy."

M. Ratichon smiled, bowed, and waited.

"Last night, about midnight, a couple of masked burglars entered the apartment of her Majesty the Queen of Transbalkania and stole a diamond necklace, that to her has a great sentimental as well as monetary value. Now, M. Ratichon, I have reasons to know that the necklet which was stolen last night was *not* the original, valuable one, but one manufactured of Parisian diamonds, to my order, by M. Durand, the jeweller, and placed a few days ago in lieu of the real one, by myself, without the knowledge of the Queen. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly, your Majesty, perfectly," said M. Ratichon, his little eyes blinking with mirth at this Royal confession.

"The Queen, under the impression that the real necklet has been stolen, will naturally move heaven and earth to recover it. Now, I don't wish the stolen necklet to turn up. Do you understand?"

"Nothing could be easier, your Majesty," said Ratichon, highly delighted at what promised to be a most interesting case. "Your Majesty wishes me to trace *sub rosa* the stolen necklet, obtain it from the thief by any means in my power, and return it to your Majesty without anyone being the wiser. I presume that as the stolen article is made up of imitation stones, your Majesty would not object to buying it back from the thief. It would greatly facilitate matters."

"Not in the least," said the King; "it is really what I would wish you to do. You have my full permission to act as you think best. Five thousand francs shall be your reward if you bring me back that necklet without anyone but you and the unknown thief having seen it."

"I will start on my campaign to-morrow. How shall I communicate with your Majesty?"

"I will call here every week to see you when you can report progress. Here are 1000 francs on account. In the meanwhile I leave this photograph of the necklet. Study it carefully, so that you may know it when you see it. As you see, there are five rows of solitaires, every alternate one being a black diamond. M. Durand did his work well—the imitation was a perfect one."

"Everything shall be done, according to your Majesty's desire; but," added M. Ratichon, as Yussuf III. rose to leave, "may I be permitted, as your Majesty's most humble servant, to give a word of warning, and that is, in my absence do not consult Cartouche. He is an honest fellow, but weak in the head, very."

Thereupon his Majesty, having turned to go, M. Ratichon escorted him downstairs to his brougham with many a low bow, and rubbing his hands with delight.

As soon as his Majesty the King of Transbalkania was alone, leaning back in his carriage, he gave a sigh of relief:

"Now, I think, I am safe," he mused; "and on the whole the robbery will prove my salvation. Sooner or later the Queen would have discovered that the necklet had been exchanged, and her suspicions would naturally have fallen upon me, which would have been—to say the least—extremely unpleasant. As it is, while her mind is busy with the chase after the stolen imitation necklet, Lewis Samuel will hand me over the 2,000,000 francs for the real one. I wonder what the old fox wants with such a magnificent necklace. He swore to me that it should never be worn in Paris; I trust he will keep his word. They say he is ruining himself over the beautiful Diane de Wolfenheim. Well, if he means to give her the necklace my Royal wife is not very likely to meet *that* lady anywhere in society; and, in the meanwhile, she will mourn the stolen *collier*, which she will never find, thanks to that scoundrel Ratichon. Yes! I think on the whole my unknown friends, the thieves of last night, have done me a really good turn; what a

disappointment for them, though, when they discover that they have taken all this trouble for the sake of so much paste!"

His Majesty was in the highest spirits; he ordered his coachman to drive him to the Bois de Boulogne, and spent, on the whole, a most pleasant afternoon.

It was Saturday night at the opera and "tout Paris" was there, eager to applaud the work of the great German master which it had hissed so vigorously not two decades ago. The crowd was a brilliant one, and included everybody that was anybody both in the "grand monde," the literary, the artistic, and the "demi monde"; it even included M. Cartouche, also his partner, M. Ratichon, who had treated themselves to a couple of stalls, not because they had any very pronounced Wagnerian tendencies, but because on gala occasions such as the present one, the police very frequently availed themselves of the help of these astute gentlemen, to watch the representatives of the light-fingered gentry that usually mix in a fashionable throng, where ladies wear earrings and bracelets, things, in fact, that are easily detached and made away with in a crowd.

M. Cartouche had had a great many disappointments in connection with Queen Mathilde's necklace; so far he had been unable to discover any clue, and was beginning to be at his wits' end as to what his next move should be. His professional reputation was at stake; surely he was not going to fail over so simple a case.

It was during one of the *entr'actes* that M. Cartouche first caught sight—it was a mere flash—of a very beautiful woman seated in one of the boxes close to the stage, and partially hidden by the heavy red curtain that drapes these boxes on either side.

What actually prompted him to watch that box for the remainder of the evening, I don't think he knew himself, for he had merely seen a fine profile, which evidently belonged to a foreigner, an abundance of fair hair,



His Majesty turned to go.

and the gleam of a white neck and arms covered in diamonds. The last act was over, the audience, unlike an English one, had waited motionless till the last chords of the splendid finale had died away, and now there was a general rush for the doors, while M. Cartouche, his opera-glass still fixed on a certain box, was waiting he knew not for what.

Ratichon had left him, some five minutes previously, when suddenly the



A fine cloak was being wrapped round her shoulders by an attentive swain.

owner of the beautiful profile rose in full view of the house, while a fine cloak was being wrapped round her shoulders by an attentive swain. M. Cartouche gave an involuntary start; on her neck was a gorgeous necklet, composed of magnificent diamonds, some black, some white—there were no two such necklets in the world, it was Queen Mathilde's. Inwardly thankful that Ratichon had gone, M. Cartouche rushed out into the foyer, hoping to intercept the fair one as she stepped into the carriage and, if possible, follow her to her place of residence.

He stood in the crowd outside, at the bottom of the long flight of steps, eager and excited, and saw her coming down, surrounded by two or three young men about town, while an elegant little brougham drove up. Cartouche hailed a fiacre, gave the driver a few whispered directions not to lose sight of the brougham in question, and was about to get in, when, without any warning or subsequent apology, some clumsy passer-by pushed against him, and threw him headlong on to the pavement; poor Cartouche vainly tried to get up again; he had been seriously hurt, he could move neither foot nor shoulder, and would have been in a sorry plight indeed, had not M. Ratichon been most providentially close at hand. He picked up his poor maimed partner, led him to a cab and took him home, while Cartouche had the mortification of seeing the elegant little coupé drive briskly away down the boulevard.

For the next day or two poor Cartouche was quite unable to get about, and was raging inwardly at the clumsy assailant that had forced him to inactivity when such a splendid clue had been within his grasp. M. Ratichon was most kind and tender in his attentions; he appeared full of business and offered to take all responsibilities for the next few days off his partner's shoulders.

It was fully three days after the eventful night at the opera that Cartouche—taking advantage of the absence of Ratichon, who had just gone away on business, he said, for a week or two—aided by the porters and a couple of sticks, managed to struggle into a fiacre. Having given the driver directions to take him to all the principal hotels in Paris, M. Cartouche started on his search for the fair foreigner who owned the beautiful profile and wore Queen Mathilde's stolen necklet.

Cartouche had brought the drawing-out of hall porters of hotels to the level of a fine art, and he knew he would have no difficulty in discovering the *pied-à-terre* of a foreign lady of great beauty, who was sure to have selected one of the best hotels in the town for a temporary residence. He meant to begin his tour at the Grand Hotel; then on to the Continental, the Bristol, the Meurice, and so on. It was at the latter place that, on his describing the lady he was seeking to the hall porter, who was just busy putting some luggage on a cab, that worthy informed him that the description could but apply to the Baroness Diane de Wolfenheim, who had stayed at the Hotel Meurice for a week on her way to Monte Carlo; that it was her luggage that was being put on the cab at the moment, and that the lady herself was leaving by the express that same evening, and was at this very moment having an early dinner.

Cartouche, somewhat discomfited at these tidings, hobbled towards the dining-room, and, casting a glance through the glass door, he ascertained that the lady he was seeking was dining, together with two or three friends, and was evidently dressed for a long railway journey; having reached his cab with as much speed as his maimed limbs would allow him, he ordered the driver to take him home.

Once safely shut in the privacy of his dressing-room, he scanned carefully the innumerable coats, hats, and wigs that littered his cupboard, and, having selected a military get-up, and a venerable-looking wig, he proceeded carefully to the accomplishment of one of the numerous disguises of which he alone knew the secret. Half-an-hour later there stood on the departure platform of the P.L.M. railway a somewhat elderly, military-looking gentleman, wearing the inevitable red ribbon of the Legion of Honour in his button-hole, and carrying one arm in a sling; an iron-grey

much-waxed moustache that adorned his upper lip, and a pair of bushy eyebrows, completing the warlike appearance of this individual, in whom I doubt if even M. Ratichon would have recognised his partner M. Cartouche.

Having eagerly scanned all the intending passengers, Cartouche soon espied the Baroness Diane de Wolfenheim giving a few final directions to her maid, who, having made her mistress as comfortable as possible, was about to retire to a second-class compartment, when the alert ears of the little detective caught a phrase that made his heart thrill with expectation. The Baroness Wolfenheim was just saying to her maid: "Leave my dressing-bag that contains my jewels with me; I prefer to have them under my own eye."

Cartouche waited till the guard had closed most of the carriage doors, then, hobbling forward on his stick, and with the vigour born of intense excitement, that made him forget his dislocated shoulder, he jumped into the carriage in which the Baroness was sitting. A minute afterwards, the express having started for Marseilles, Cartouche found himself with the prospect of a twelve hours' *tête-à-tête* with the lady who had in her possession the Queen of Transbalkania's diamond necklet.

At that moment, however, an unpleasant surprise awaited him: turning round, he noticed that he and Baroness Wolfenheim were not the only occupants of the carriage. In an opposite angle was an old gentleman buried in a huge fur coat, a black velvet skull-cap pulled over his white hair, and one eye—the right one—hidden beneath a green shade. He was fast asleep evidently, for an occasional vigorous snore was heard from his quarter from time to time.

The Baroness shrugged her shoulders and looked at M. Cartouche as much as to say, "there will surely be no chance of getting any sleep to-night." This expressive shrug Cartouche interpreted as a permission to start a slight conversation with his fellow traveller, and very soon the astute detective had made himself agreeable to the lady. He looked so respectable in his tightly buttoned frock coat. His arm, he told her, had been permanently injured at Sedan, for which, eight years later, a tardily grateful Government had decorated him with the Legion of Honour and the grade of Colonel.

In return he learned from the beautiful Baroness that she was going to Monte Carlo, would stay at the "Hotel des Etrangers," and meant to try her luck—she usually succeeded—at the gaming tables. Together they indulged in a few elegantly worded anathemas against the noisy sleeper, which naturally led Cartouche to remark that he, personally, never travelled without a mild narcotic, which his friend, Docteur Fargeas, always mixed for him, and which was invaluable in a case like the present one. Would Madame honour him by joining him in taking a dose of the great doctor's prescription? Madame thought the notion delightful, she revelled in sleeping draughts, they produced such delightful dreams, she accepted Monsieur le Colonel's offer with much pleasure.

Cartouche thereupon drew from his dressing-bag a tiny box, which bore the great doctor's name on the lid. He offered the lady one of the small globules, which she took with a little laugh of amusement, then, curling herself up in a corner like a pretty kitten, she closed her eyes, and less than half-an-hour afterwards Cartouche had the satisfaction of hearing two sets of snores instead of one.

He looked at his watch, it was past three o'clock, the express was slowing, evidently previous to stopping at a station. This was a splendid chance for Cartouche, the lady's dressing-bag was lying close to her elbow, she herself was fast asleep, their fellow-passenger had not stirred; as the train steamed into the station, Cartouche stealthily picked up the bag, opened the carriage door, and had his foot on the step, ready to jump out, when a hand was laid on his shoulder from behind, and a gentle voice said to him:

"Monsieur, I think you have made a mistake; that is madame's bag you are carrying, here is your own. Oh! no thanks, monsieur, no apologies; I am sure it was only a mistake, here is your own bag. So glad to have rendered you a service. Good night."

And the old fellow-passenger with the one eye deposited Cartouche and his bag on the platform, then got back into the carriage, leaving the discomfited detective bewildered and helpless, while the express began steaming out of the little wayside station; it had only stopped one minute, and soon bore out of Cartouche's sight the beautiful Baroness, Queen Mathilde's necklet, and the meddlesome, one-eyed old gentleman.

There is always a great deal of bustle, animation, and excitement round the gaming tables in the Casino at Monte Carlo, more particularly so when some player is more notoriously unlucky or lucky than his fellow-gamblers.



A somewhat elderly, military-looking gentleman carrying one arm in a sling.

but the excitement is always twice as great when that notoriously lucky or unlucky player happens to be a woman.

The Baroness Diane de Wolfenheim was creating quite a sensation with her wild and hazardous play, and an interested group of spectators had crowded round her, watching her jewelled fingers gathering the gold and notes in ever growing heaps round her, for she was winning, and winning considerably; she was in high spirits, and looked radiantly beautiful in her rich evening gown, round her neck a dazzling *collier* that, with its rare and costly black solitaires, excited the envy and admiration of all the bystanders of the gentler sex.

"One last coup," said Diane de Wolfenheim laughing, "to complete the million I have just won, and then I will vacate the place," and she pushed, without taking the trouble to count, a pile of gold pieces on the red.

"*Le jeu est fait*," shouted the croupier as the roulette went spinning round.

"*Noir, Milieu, Passe, Impair*."

"You have lost, madame," said a sardonic-looking old man in a black velvet skull cap and wearing a green shade over one eye, who was standing close to Diane, as the croupier swept her gold pieces away.

"Oh! I shall win on the next coup," retorted Diane, a little taken aback at the sudden break in her continued luck, and she placed a pile of bank notes once more upon the red.

"*Noir, Dernier, Passe, Pair*," came from the croupier's voice, and Diane had lost again.

The sardonic-looking old man smiled a little as he noticed that her pretty hand shook somewhat as she placed another still larger pile of notes and gold on the red, only to see them swept away once more by the croupier's indiscriminating rake.

"Bah!" she said with an affectation of gaiety, "I must fight fortune on her own ground, and dare all in order to win all." And with feverish haste she gathered in the palm of her hand as much as she could hold, and placed them once more on the red.

"Noir wins!" said the sardonic old man with a grin.

Diane de Wolfenheim had turned very pale. Tears of rage were gathering in her eyes, but, with a gambler's obstinacy, again and again she risked her fast diminishing piles of gold, until the last louis d'or was lost; and when that was gone, more eager than ever to retrieve her luck, after a second's hesitation she took off from round her neck the splendid *collier* she was wearing, and, looking round at the spectators, who were eyeing her curiously, she said:

"Will anyone buy this necklet from me? I want a million—it is worth three."

There was a pause. For one moment even the croupiers ceased their continual "*Faites votre jeu*." Everybody stood still gazing at the fair gambler, her cheeks flushed with keen excitement, the magnificent necklet falling like glittering rain between her fingers.

"Allow me, madame," said the sardonic old gentleman, as he took the jewel from her. "I see this is quite a unique necklet. Each alternate diamond forming these rows is a black one. The bibelot would be of incalculable value were the stones real."

"Real, monsieur! What do you mean?" said Diane, wild with excitement.

"What I said, madame," said the old man quietly; "and as I am fond of paste, and really admire Parisian diamonds, I will with pleasure buy this of you for 5000 francs. I can advance you the money now, and you can verify the truth of my assertion by consulting M. Durand there, who is an expert in these matters, and who very probably made this necklace himself."

"I care to ask no one, monsieur, I know those stones are real," said Diane, trying to remain defiant, yet shaken by the sangfroid and positive assertions of the old man, who now stood expectant, the necklet in one hand, a small bundle of banknotes in the other, which he held stretched out to her. The croupiers had paused, the game for one moment had ceased, while the spectators stood watching the end of this curious little comedy.

Suddenly a pleasant, though somewhat gruff, voice interposed, while a thin hand was stretched out towards the necklet: "If madame will allow me, I will take the liberty to buy this jewel from her, whether false or real, makes no difference to me, so long as I have the pleasure of being of service to her."

All eyes were turned towards the speaker, a military-looking, somewhat elderly man, with one arm in a sling and the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour in his buttonhole. Without any more ado he counted out ten notes of a hundred thousand francs each, and, having handed them to Diane, he quietly took the necklet from the hands of the sardonic one-eyed old man, who was now speechless with astonishment. Then putting it into the inner pocket of his coat, he walked out of the gaming saloon, taking no further heed of the spectators.

A general hum of conversation followed his exit. Diane, eager to

resume the game, turned her back on the man who had for five minutes placed her in such an uncomfortable position. The latter hesitated but for a moment, then taking his hat, which he pulled well over his eyes, he left the Casino followed by the titters of the spectators.

The esplanade was quite deserted, but in the distance he spied the figure of the military-looking old man slowly wending his way towards the railway station. A train left for Nice soon after midnight, then on to Paris; there were but ten minutes during which the necklet could be got back. Not a soul was about but the two old men, one following the other—

A tussle, a scuffle, and two human forms struggling on the ground, while one voice tried to utter screams of "Thief," "Murder."

Then an almost simultaneous shriek on the part of both the combatants, as the respective wigs, false beards, and noses were knocked off in the fray:

"Cartouche! What in the name of goodness are you doing here?"

"Ratichon! You murdering scoundrel, what do you want in this place?"

The two partners stood in the dimly lighted road, both mud-stained and bedraggled, savage.

"Cartouche," said Ratichon, with as much dignity as the situation allowed, "perhaps you will explain to me, how it is you have just spent a million francs, which I presume is the firm's money, on buying a necklace made of false stones."

"False stones, man," shrieked Cartouche, "that necklace belongs to her Majesty the Queen of Transbalkania, and is worth three million francs, she will buy it back from me for two."

"That necklace, you indiscriminating idiot, is one made by Durand, the jeweller, to the order of his ex-Majesty the King, and substituted by that exalted personage for the real one, which he has sold to Lewis Samuel, the money-lender. It is for him I was acting, as he does not wish madame, his wife, to know of this little transaction. He was highly delighted when the imitation necklace was stolen; and he has commissioned me to see that it never sees the light of day."

"Great heavens," said Cartouche, "you traitor, this comes of your doing business by yourself, and not consulting me. If what you say is true, you have lost the firm one million francs."

"What about yourself acting without my knowledge," said Ratichon highly offended, "but the million is not lost yet; I think I can invent a plausible story that will satisfy the King, and you must palm off the imitation necklace on her Majesty, and claim, say, two millions in exchange, after which there would be no occasion for us to stay in Paris any longer. Eh! Cartouche?"

"No," said Cartouche reflectively, "perhaps not, unless," he added, "this necklet should, after all, turn out to be the real one. Lewis Samuel may have sold it or given it to the fair Baroness. We may both have been chasing the wrong game."

"Well," said Ratichon, "Durand is staying in this place, I saw him in the gaming-room to-night. We'll find him at his hotel to-morrow, and for the credit of the firm know how we stand."

Three days after M. Cartouche had the honour of presenting to Queen Mathilde the restored black diamond necklet, for which he was able with a clear conscience to receive two million francs, for M. Durand had pronounced the necklet to be the real one; and in the evening, over a bottle of the best champagne, the two partners solemnly shook each other by the hand.

"Never again, friend Ratichon!" said Cartouche. "United we stand—"

"Amen," said Ratichon, "union is strength. Never again, friend Cartouche."

And overcome with emotion they fell on each other's necks and wept tears of joy at the reunification of the firm of "Cartouche & Ratichon."



A tussle, a scuffle, and two human forms struggling on the ground.





By ALICE L. CALLANDER.

I.

THE dusky servants clad in pure white muslin, with the crest of the regiment fastened in front of their turbans, moved noiselessly round the long mess table. The faint, regular breath of the punkahs stirred the heavy atmosphere, and the head scent of magnolia blossoms, strewn among the silver and gold of the regimental plate, was cut by a more pungent odour of fresh ground coffee coming through the open windows of the mess kitchen. The Scarlet Hussars were entertaining General Sir Dallas Bengough, K.C.B., V.C., a distinguished soldier, and the youngest General in the British army.

Sitting on the right hand of the Colonel was the guest of the evening, a tall, handsome man in the prime of life. The hair which rippled over his well-shaped head, in spite of the uncompromising military close crop, presenting a remarkable contrast to the black eyebrows and moustache, altogether, a face full of power and energy, proclaiming a born leader of men.

The strains of the regimental band ceased for a moment, while the toast of "The Queen" was drunk in silence, the officers, who had risen to their feet, each breaking the slender stem of his empty wine-glass, as was the good old custom. Then the buzz of conversation went round once more, and the subtle aroma of cigars and cigarettes began to mingle with the scent of magnolias. Above the men's heads there gathered a faint blue mist that curled and waved among the twinkling wax candles, as the light breath of the punkahs continued to stir the heat-saturated atmosphere of the Indian night.

"The General is not in his usual form this evening," whispered a subaltern to his own guest, a man in the Woods and Forests. "You know, he has just engaged himself to Lady Violet Verschoyle, the Governor's daughter."

The civilian looked down the undulating line of gold and scarlet to the head of the table, before answering.

"It's rough luck on a man to have to leave the girl he is going to marry, within three weeks of his wedding day, to go to the front. And after all, these frontier expeditions are wretched affairs."

"Ah, that's a civilian's point of view. Besides, this business may be serious. I take it, the General thinks so; look at his face."

Certainly, the face of General Sir Dallas Bengough bore out the fancy of the subaltern. It was very pale under its golden tan, and the two upright lines ploughing his forehead, between the deep-set, dark blue eyes, were more marked than usual, and now and then the finely cut lips twitched under the dark line of moustache. Evidently the subaltern was right; something must have gone very wrong with Sir Dallas Bengough.

"Who are the A.D.C.s?" asked the man in the Woods and Forests.

"Yorke of ours, and Findhorn of the Carbineers."

"What, Findhorn, the Governor's nephew, who wanted to marry Lady Violet so badly last year?"

"The same. That's him sitting over there, three from the major, on this side—curious-looking fellow, isn't he?"

The object of their conversation, a tall gaunt officer, with a face like a badly coloured meerschaum, looked up as if conscious of their attention.

"Odd chap, too," continued the subaltern. "Always wonder why he went for a soldier. He's forever burying that parchment phiz of his between the pages of a musty book. And he doesn't shoot or ride, or play polo—only cares about queer sorts of occult sciences—Theosophy, Buddhism, hypnotism, and black magic generally."

"They aren't quite the same thing," quoth the man in the Woods and Forests. "Twenty years of India is apt to change a man's ideas about such matters as the young soldier was wont to stigmatize as 'conjuring tricks.'"

The subaltern waved his hand in polite acquiescence, or perhaps disclaimer. These things did not enter into his philosophy.

"Do you know how the General happened to choose Findhorn?" asked the civilian.

"Yes. The Governor suggested it. Sir Dallas applied for Yorke,

whose father was his oldest friend. He wanted a second A.D.C., and Lord Westborough proposed his giving Findhorn the billet. They say he understands the natives. I don't know, I'm sure—he gives me the cold shudders! He's like a long whitey-brown paper snake."

The civilian thought the simile not inapt as his eyes fell on the narrow visage, on the scant ginger flakes of fine hair and drooping silk of the colourless moustache, shading the thin lips of Sir Dallas Bengough's A.D.C.

"He's certainly not an attractive-looking fellow. I can understand that Lady Violet's fancy was not taken."

"No, but of course they've known each other since they were children. His father was killed out hunting and his mother died when he was born—Lord Westborough was her brother, and brought this chap up. Lord Westborough would have liked the marriage for Lady Violet, because Findhorn will have a lot of money some day. But from the moment Sir Dallas came along everyone saw how the wind blew; Findhorn's chance, if he ever had any, was gone. The General isn't a lady's man at all, you know, but upon my word I think he took the disease all the worse on that account. I never saw anyone so completely bowled over, and I fancy that's what is making him look so glum just now. Well—we shall meet later at the ball at Government House to-night. 'So long.'"

In the huge conservatory that runs the length of one side of Government House, seated in a low bamboo chair cushioned with great pillows of rose brocade, was Lady Violet Verschoyle. The strange weird light of the strings of Japanese lanterns that swung among the palms, great globes of quaint shape and gorgeous hue, fell on her beautiful face, and on the shimmering pearl of her gown.

Beside her was Sir Dallas Bengough, holding her fan of white ostrich feathers in his lean brown hand as he bent over her, fanning her gently. The scarlet of his tunic made a dash of vivid colour in the scene already picturesque enough.

Within was heard the crash of wind instruments playing a stirring waltz—and near by tinkled a little fountain that splashed and sighed, and tossed its tiny diamond drops almost at their feet. Without, the sound of guests departing, the guttural cries of servants, the measured lilt of horses' feet. The Government House ball was drawing to its close.

"To-morrow," sighed the girl, trying to control the quiver of her lips.

"To-morrow!" echoed the man. "For God's sake, Violet, don't make a coward of me! I've faced death a hundred times before, but I have never felt in all my life as I do to-night!"

His nervous fingers dropped the fan, and he held her hand instead. The girl smiled bravely up into his face as she answered:

"Please God, your love for me may never make you less brave, less of a hero than you are. I love your courage, I adore it!"

Her white fingers strayed over the medals upon his breast as she spoke, and suddenly bending her head, she dropped a light kiss upon the little bronze cross athwart the words, "For Valour."

Dallas Bengough's arm was thrown round her. "I don't know that my V.C. ever brought me a better moment than this," he whispered to her huskily.

"I made father tell me about it," the girl said softly. "How you brought the wounded soldiers out of the burning house under a rain of bullets, one by one! And how—" But Dallas Bengough stopped her.

"And how I had the luck to have a fuss made over what was nothing at all, Violet. These things are only the fortune of war, as much an accident as the wonderful chance that made me win your precious love."

"You make me so proud," the girl said tenderly, "so proud and so humble, to think that my love really means something to you, and yet to feel how utterly unworthy I am of you."

Dallas Bengough laughed.

"My sweet," he said, "I could find a thousand things to say, but none that would express one half my wonder and gratitude."

As he spoke, the tall, gaunt figure of Captain Findhorn appeared among the palms. He stood for a moment silently contemplating his cousin and his Chief with an inscrutable smile on his thin lips.

"His Excellency wants you for a minute, Violet. I apologise, sir, for disturbing you."

No man can bear with equanimity being taken unawares under such circumstances, and Sir Dallas was at that moment a very Samson shorn of his strength. His reply was curt and his manner distant, as he dismissed the intruder with a stiff: "Thank you, Findhorn. I will take Lady Violet to her father."

"Lady Violet! Confound his insolence—my own cousin!" muttered the enraged A.D.C., looking after them as they strolled away. "If he had not come across my path, I would have made her love me, forced her to care. What are his showy attractions to powers such as mine, curse him! But look to yourself, Dallas Bengough, I have not done with you yet!"

He threw himself into the chair his cousin had just left, and lighting a cigarette, gazed moodily at the spirals of smoke that escaped from his tightly folded lips.

"Great God, how I love her!" he cried half to himself. "And how she hates me! She never liked me, but since that day when I was fool enough to threaten to hypnotise her will, and compel her obedience, her whole soul has been in revolt against me. I am as odious to her as some creeping thing. And yet, even now I could get her that way, but what would it be worth—a body without a soul!"

The man's face worked. The lines of his mouth hardened, and from between his half closed eyelids the steely glitter of his eyes was visible like points of flame.

"To-morrow. Aye, to-morrow," he muttered, as he threw the end of his cigarette into a tub of aloes, and rising, walked out into the glory of the star-spangled night. For to-morrow General Sir Dallas Bengough and his staff went to the front.

II.

Within the rough brown walls of the fort of Donga Pa, in that part of the building which served as ante room, temporary mess, and commanding officer's quarters, Sir Dallas Bengough was seated at a rickety table, an ordnance map spread out before him. A group of officers belonging to the various regiments taking part in the expedition stood idly in the doorway, exchanging desultory remarks in an undertone, while a native officer of the Punjab Irregular Horse leaned with one hand on the table, tracing out a course with his finger on the ordnance map.

The General looked ten years older than when he had started for the frontier six weeks before. His eyes were sunken and dull, his face grey and withered, and there were lines about the mouth, a relaxing of the under lip, which completely did away with the look of determination which had been its chief characteristic. Certainly, a mud fort in the hills is not a pleasing residence, nor is a diet of tinned food apt to be stimulating—to say nothing of such minor discomforts as mosquitoes and fleas. But surely pin-pricks these, to so keen a soldier! Yet the Chief looked listless and desperately weary, as he sat with his head leaning on his hand, apparently paying but little attention to the words of the native officer.

"The sole entry, you say, is through this narrow gorge?" he said at last, rousing himself with an effort. "It seems to me a regular death-trap, Hirah Singh."

"It is the only way," answered the native. "It is a matter for swiftness and silence, covered by the darkness. The thing is not easy, Sahib, but . . . it is possible!"

"The question is, whether I am justified in risking the lives of the men on what may end in failure," muttered the General, nervously beating with his hand upon the map before him.

Hirah Singh lifted his dark eyebrows in surprise. The Chief was not wont to be so tender of men's lives.

Captain Findhorn, one of the A.D.C.'s, drew near the table. "I believe that Hirah Singh is right, sir—the thing seems possible," he murmured respectfully.

Sir Dallas started, and an angry glance flashed from his eyes, but they gradually fell before the steady gaze of the A.D.C., and the momentary flush faded from his cheek, leaving it ashen grey.

Hirah Singh looked from one to the other of the two men, his piercing black eyes resting on Findhorn as if they would penetrate to his very soul; then slowly withdrawing them, he turned to the General.

"I have told the Sahib that the thing was not easy, but possible. I have spoken," he said.

"Why on earth does the Chief let Findhorn interfere," whispered a green-coated officer of the Goorkhas impatiently to Archie Yorke, the other A.D.C., "I don't like that fellow, and it's an open secret that he hates the Chief."

"He does his duty," answered Yorke, with scrupulous impartiality. He cordially disliked Findhorn himself.

"Does his duty! Overdoes it, you mean; he hardly ever leaves the General's side. However, for once, Findhorn seems to be in favour of action, so perhaps, as he has some sort of influence with the Chief, we may be allowed to have a try at dislodging that old Mullah from his eyrie to-night."

The rebel Mullah or priest, whose fiery utterances and denunciations among the tribes had been the chief cause of the frontier rising, had up to now moved with his followers from point to point, avoiding a face to face encounter with the soldiers of the Queen, preferring to pick off the redcoats here and there at long range, or by such methods as the occasional murder of a sentry or two on outpost duty, or the cracking of a skull by the sudden fall of a rock from some height inaccessible to any but a goat or a born mountaineer.

But gradually an impression was gaining ground among the rebels that for some inexplicable reason the commander of the punitive force was adopting a policy of inaction so little in keeping with his well-known go-ahead tactics as to inspire his foes with something very like contempt, instead of the wholesome fear with which they had hitherto regarded him. Encouraged by the apparent supineness of the enemy, the Mullah resolved to change his method of warfare, and taking up his station at Bersund, a stronghold only accessible through the long narrow gorge of Jarra—a regular "death-trap," as Sir Dallas Bengough had called it—he began harassing the British by a series of night raids and cattle lifting forays, rendered bolder every day by impunity.

Nearly three weeks had been passed in this extraordinary inactivity on the part of the British forces; officers and men were becoming

impatient, and beginning to wonder what had come over the Chief. Only two nights before, a party of Goorkhas on forage duty had been surprised and cut up by the Afghans. The men were thirsting to revenge their comrades, the officers were sick of such limp soldiering; altogether, a strong ripple of discontent was moving the face of the waters. Something of the prevailing spirit had been communicated to the General, for after many hesitations he decided to attempt to force the Jarra Pass and dislodge the chieftain-priest from his fastness. When the news filtered down to the men's quarters, such a ringing cheer went up that its echo reached the ears of the Afghan scouts lurking higher up among the hills.

"Hark to the braying of the asses, Shafiz Ullah."

"Or is it the growl of the tiger, Amrah Khan?"

Shafiz Ullah had become acquainted with the inside of an English jail-khana seven years before, and narrowly escaped hanging. He was consequently less loudly assertive than his comrade of the superiority of Afghans over Englishmen.

"Tigers! Asses, I tell thee, braying asses! Those beasts of burden are ever wont to lift up their voices before a thunder-storm—and I smell thunder in the air."

Shafiz Ullah did not continue the argument, but contented himself with muttering in his oily black beard the Afghan equivalent of: "*Qui vivra verra!*"

There was silence on the hill-side, unbroken save for the rumbling of distant thunder, and the moaning of the pine-trees, swaying and creaking in the night wind. Under cover of the inky darkness the attacking party, consisting of about 750 men, climbed the steep ascent with as much speed as the rough nature of the ground would allow, a troop of the Punjab Irregular Horse leading the way. In their midst rode Sir Dallas Bengough, surrounded by his staff, Captain Findhorn occupying his usual position at the General's right hand. A little to the rear were Archie Yorke and Hirah Singh. There was an unspoken sympathy between the junior A.D.C. and the native officer, and the boyish face of the one was seldom seen very far apart from the dark manly visage of the other.

All went well till the British forces reached the broad plateau of Kumarsund at the other end of which was the entrance to the Jarra Pass, more than three-quarters of a mile away. A halt was called; both men and horses needed breathing after their stiff climb.

Half-an-hour passed in this inaction, and all were beginning to wonder when the order to advance would be given.

The storm which had been threatening when the troops set out on their night march was drawing nearer and nearer; continuous thunder echoed among the hills while the lightning played overhead, illuminating the impatient faces of the men, as they grumbled at the inexplicable delay. Suddenly, a white flash, that lighted up the country for miles around, zig-zagged across the murky sky, followed by a deafening roar that seemed to shake and rend the mountains to their very foundations.



Beside her was Sir Dallas Bengough.

Down came the hail, tinkling on the troopers' accoutrements, and reducing their turbans to pulp, so that they were fain to throw themselves face downward to avoid the stinging blast, while it beat mercilessly on the bare backs of the frantic horses. Fortunately the sound of the trampling hoofs was deadened by the hail-stones, in which they were soon wading up to their fetlocks. The air turned icy cold, and, although the hail ceased after a minute and was replaced by torrents of rain, both men and horses had had their tempers thoroughly spoilt.

"The hill-dogs would have a fine chance if they rushed us now,"

Sir Dallas Bengough
was sitting on his
narrow camp bed.



whispered Hirah Singh into the ear of Archie Yorke. But low as he had spoken, the Chief caught his words, and turning suddenly, he gave the order to retreat.

A moment of stupor followed. Then some of the native officers began to break their swords, while an all but mutinous murmur rose from the ranks. But deaf alike to intreaty and expostulation, the General turned his horse's head, and closely followed by Captain Findhorn, rode swiftly off down the steep incline, now converted into a torrent by the relentlessly falling rain. As he passed near where Archie Yorke and Hirah Singh were standing, a flash of lightning revealed to them every line of his face.

"Didst thou see, Yorke Sahib!"

But Archie Yorke turned away, an almost hysterical sob rising in his throat. For that which both men had seen in the face of Dallas Bengough, V.C., was fear—abject, mortal fear!

The storm rolled away overhead, the thunder sounding like the faint rattle of distant artillery, while thin snake-like flashes cut the darkness at fitful intervals. Draggled, disheartened, and soaked to the skin, the troops slowly made their way down the hill-side in sullen silence. No sound was heard, save the irregular tramp of feet dragging out of step, the stumbling of weary horses, and the swish of the thin, persistent rain.

Dawn was breaking as they reached Donga Pa. The officers, avoiding each others' eyes, dispersed to turn in their men; and the General, dismounting, sought his own quarters, leaning heavily on the arm of Captain Findhorn, who attended his Chief with a face as inscrutable as the sphynx.

III.

Sir Dallas Bengough was sitting on his narrow camp bed, his elbows resting on his knees, his head bent down. His whole attitude was that of a broken man, and when he raised his head, the eyes had a haggard light in them, and the two upright lines upon his forehead seemed to be ploughed almost to the bone.

"Great Heavens," he muttered, as his hands nervously clenched and unclenched amid the crisp thicket of his hair. "What is to become of me, if in the most desperate moment of my life I can neither think nor reason? What is this horror that has fallen on me, this abject, beastly cowardice that is with me night and day? I am only fit to die, and yet I am afraid to end my wretched life. It takes all the manhood that is left in me not to howl with terror and bury my head when I see the puff of smoke and hear the crack of the rifles! My God, it's awful—awful!"

He rose and took a couple of quick turns up and down the hut. A long, thin shadow fell upon the floor, and Sir Dallas stopped short in his walk, as the figure of Captain Findhorn appeared in the doorway. Without advancing into the room, the A.D.C. stood on the threshold, fixing a steady gaze on his Chief, who, with a snarl, attempted to ask him "why the dickens he was staring so." But the words died away in an indistinct murmur, and Findhorn, stepping quietly to the General's side, led him unresisting to the camp bed on to which he sank like one in a dream. The young man bent over him, softly making a few passes before his eyes; the heavy head drooped on the pillow, the muscles relaxed, and Sir Dallas Bengough sank into a deep, death-like sleep.

"Lie there like a rotting hulk, Dallas Bengough! I said I would be even with you yet! But my vengeance is not complete, and your shattered nerves need a respite. Sleep, therefore, sleep sound, but wake to the consciousness of your degradation, to the knowledge that name and fame are slipping from you, and that the love which was given to a hero will be withdrawn from a coward. . . . Ye Powers of darkness, subtle spirits

of Evil, come to my aid! Sear his strong brain, and shrivel the stout heart within him, till his courage sink and disappear like water spilt on the sand!"

Findhorn's voice rose, his whole being seemed transfigured. His pallid face was aflame, and his hair sparkled and stood on end like a halo round his head, while lambent fire shot from his eyes. So absorbed was he that he never noticed a dusky face peering in at the window through the curtains of split bamboo, and following his every movement with lynx-like eyes; nor did he catch the tread of stealthy feet turning swiftly round the corner of the mud hut, as he issued forth a few moments later from the General's quarters and went in search of Archie Yorke.

He found him seated on the curbstone of an old well in the outer court, pulling savagely at a damp cigar. Findhorn himself was above such vices.

"I have just left the Chief sound asleep," he said.

"I expect the Chief is badly in need of rest," answered Yorke briefly.

"After last night?" sneered the other.

"Just so!" snapped Yorke, restraining a strong desire to kick him.

"I'll tell you what, Yorke—Phew! how rank your tobacco is!—there's something badly wrong with the Chief," persisted Findhorn, ignoring the hostile attitude of his brother A.D.C. "Did you ever see such soldiering as we have been treated to lately!"

"Pleasant," muttered Yorke under his breath. "I wonder how much more you have noticed?"

"Don't lose your temper. Look here, you have known Sir Dallas Bengough all your life. Have you ever heard it hinted that he was a coward?"

"No," growled Yorke with a dangerous gleam in his eyes; "because the fellow who hinted such a lie wouldn't be alive!"

"Well, you needn't excite yourself; but really, the Chief lately——"

"Oh, confound you!" thundered Archie, turning furiously on his heel and walking away.

"*Il n'y a que la vérité qui blesse*," quoted Findhorn to himself, complacently stroking the pale straggling silk of his moustache; "I wonder what Violet would say if she could see her hero now."

Captain Yorke walked across the courtyard after leaving Findhorn, and leaned both elbows on the low parapet overlooking the grim stretch of barren mountains which had been the scene of last night's ignominious retreat. The A.D.C.'s young face was flushed with emotion.

"That cursed Findhorn, with his beastly insinuations! I should have liked to have crammed his words back into his throat. He hates the Chief, and yet . . . But I'll never believe it, never! He's as brave as his sword—it's this beastly climate that's knocked him all to pieces."

Hullo, Hirah Singh, is that you," as the native officer crossed the courtyard and joined him. "What have you got to say—no treason?"

"You are my brother," the native said with unconscious dignity, "and there is no treason in my heart nor on my lips. But I would speak a word in your ear concerning the General Sahib."

"The General? Anything wrong?" asked Yorke, with an assumption of ease he was far from feeling.

"We have seen how it is with our Chief—how the eagle has become as the dove, how the bones of the strong have waxed weak."

Yorke bit his lips till the blood came, and his hands twitched nervously.

"The matter is evil," continued the native, sinking his voice, "and the work of evil spirits which Findhorn Sahib holds in his hands. Last year, in Simla, I saw him do many strange things for the entertainment of the

Findhorn's voice rose, his whole
being seemed transfigured.



officers at the mess; and one thing, strangest of all, was the causing of terror to the bravest among the regiment of Guides, by the exercise of magic. He made them believe that they were alone and unarmed in the jungle, and that a tiger was upon them—the sweat poured from their faces, and their limbs shook under them. They obeyed the hand of Findhorn Sahib as though they had been little children."

"I remember the exhibition," said Archie Yorke. "It was the most disgusting thing I ever saw. But what has that got to do with the General?"

Hirah Singh lowered his voice to a cautious whisper. "I tell thee, he is bewitched! To-day I was passing near his quarters when I saw Findhorn Sahib go in. I approached cautiously, and looked through the window—the curtains are in rags, I could not but see. He laid his hands on the General thus and thus"—touching his forehead and his breast—"and the Chief lay as one dead. If Findhorn Sahib can make the soldiers of the Guides sweat with terror, he can also cast a spell over the General. Thou knowest a woman came between them, and he has done this thing in revenge."

Archie Yorke stared helplessly at Hirah Singh.

"I—I can't believe it," he stammered at last. "You mean—You mean—"

"I mean that as long as Findhorn Sahib lives, the soul of the Chief will be as wax in his hands." And having delivered himself of this sentiment, Hirah Singh departed to see after the watering of the horses, leaving the A.D.C. clutching his head in his hands, half-incredulous, yet appalled by a matter too big for his mind to grasp.

The Frontier rising, which at first was comparatively insignificant, now began to assume a more serious aspect. The news of the abortive attempt on Bersund spread like wildfire through the mountains. Village after village rose at the bidding of the Mullah, whose emissaries roused the turbulent hill-men to enthusiasm by flattering promises of glory and plunder.

"The craven English," they said, "dare not meet us in the open; but the Mullah holds them in the hollow of his hand. He will smoke the vermin from their fox-earths, and they shall be exterminated to a man, and their arms and accoutrements shall be ours."

From far and near the tribesmen flocked to join the Mullah's standard, till the armed horde at his command amounted to something over three thousand men, more than triple the strength of the British force opposed to them. With these the chieftain-priest doubted not that he would easily be able to overwhelm an enemy whose timorous and vacillating tactics had inspired himself and his followers with supreme contempt. As usual, most of the hill men were armed with rifles; from what mysterious source the supply is obtained has often puzzled their opponents. Perhaps it is as well that certain mysteries should remain unsolved.

All was bustle and excitement within the British lines. Scouts had brought news early that morning that the rebels were in movement, and that an attempt would be made to surround Donga Pa, and cut off the British from their supplies. The Mullah had divided his forces into two sections, which, by circuitous routes and keeping well out of range of the guns of the fort, were to endeavour to form a junction below Donga Pa. Unless this could be prevented, Sir Dallas Bengough and his handful of men, outnumbered and surrounded, would indeed be caught like rats in a trap.

But with the approach of danger the General seemed to have temporarily recovered his self-possession. His orders were concise and clear, his action prompt and decisive. A detachment of Goorkhas, supported by a squadron of the Irregular Horse, were to cross the valley and oppose the advance of the enemy's left wing, while Sir Dallas Bengough himself, with four hundred infantry and the remaining troopers, would meet the Mullah's forces on the right.

The officers were snatching a hasty meal preparatory to setting forth. The Chief seemed outwardly calm and collected, but those nearest him noticed that he ate nothing, only swallowing a tumbler full of raw brandy, and that his eyes had livid patches across the lower lid which spread over the cheek bone on either side.

"Have the Goorkhas started, Yorke?" he inquired of the young A.D.C.

"Yes, sir, left a quarter of an hour ago. Nippy little beggars," he added, in an undertone, to Hirah Singh, who had just come in—the native officers messed apart—"They're half-way across the valley by now."

"The lust of blood is upon them, they burn to revenge their brothers. I have no fear for them—they will drive back the enemy."

"Why shouldn't we do the same? Well led, there is every chance." But Hirah Singh without answering, looked gloomily towards the Chief, who with shaking hand was holding out his glass for Captain Findhorn to fill.

IV.

Although unprepared for the bold move of the British, the Mullah, conscious of his superiority in numbers, continued to advance in skirmishing order under cover of a small wood of rock pine, till not more than three

hundred yards of open space separated him from his opponents, who were taking advantage of such shelter as the broken ground offered. Far away across the valley, the faint report of rifles echoing from peak to peak told that the left had already engaged. After the exchange of a few desultory shots without much harm being done on either side, the Mullah resolved to attempt a rush, confident that the handful of British soldiers would never be able to withstand the shock.

On came the Afghans, swarming out of the wood, crossing the open space at a quick run, undeterred by the raking fire poured into them. . . . Under the terrific force of the impact, the "thin red line," borne backward, swayed for a moment, then broke like a spent wave. With a yell of triumph, the Mullah hewed his way to where Sir Dallas Bengough sat his horse like a statue carved out of stone, Findhorn at his side.

In the face of that fierce onslaught the General's charger swerved, turned, and if someone had not caught at its bridle would have galloped off. Archie Yorke, who had just cut down a black-bearded ruffian in the act of trying to hamstring his horse, felt his blood, hot enough at that moment, run cold in his veins. "Great God," he murmured through his clenched teeth as his sabre bit the Afghan's skull. "It's all up. . . . He was going to run away!"

"Steady—stand steady, Yorke Sahib." A rifle dropped across Yorke's shoulder, a sharp crack rang in his ear, and Findhorn, throwing up his arms, reeled in his saddle and fell headlong from his horse. "A dog should die a dog's death," said the guttural voice of Hirah Singh, as he threw away the rifle snatched a moment before from the hand of a dying rebel. It had done its work.

With head erect and eyes ablaze, he dashed through the broken line.



As Findhorn's body struck the ground, a sudden and marvellous change seemed to come over the General. With head erect and eyes ablaze, calling on his escort to follow, he dashed through the broken line, trampling down the Mullah in his onward rush. That charge was a thing to be remembered by all who lived to remember. Down went the Afghans right and left before the mighty strokes of Dallas Bengough's sword, as ripe corn falls beneath the sickle. Deeper and deeper he plunged into the seething mass, which closed up behind him. A hundred rifles covered him, a hundred knives gleamed in the air; his sword rose for the last time, then horse and man sank and disappeared, as a ship sinks in an angry sea.

Electrified by their Chief's example, and burning to avenge his fall, the troopers of the escort charged with such desperate fury that the Afghans, surprised and disconcerted, gave way on all sides. Taking advantage of the breathing-space afforded, the infantry rallied, the broken line re-formed once more, pressing forward shoulder to shoulder in the wake of their comrades. But the disheartened Afghans, already thrown into confusion by the furious onslaught of the cavalry, did not await the advent of the British

bayonets; they disbanded and fled in every direction, many throwing down their arms and asking for quarter.

The noise of battle and pursuit rolled far away, and the field remained deserted and silent, save for the dead and the dying, and the hoarse screams of kites and vultures wheeling and circling in a dense cloud overhead, still too scared by the sound of distant firing to dare begin their ghastly feast.

The sun was sinking behind the hills and the tall peaks were throwing their lengthening shadows across the valley, when the British returned to search for the body of their Chief. It was some time before they found him, so thick lay the dead above him. As Archie Yorke, himself slightly wounded, helped to raise the body of Sir Dallas Bengough, he was thinking that they might have had bitterer news than the death of her soldier for Lady Violet down in the plains—

Some twenty yards to the rear lay the body of Captain Findhorn, untouched save for a small dark hole perforating his tunic below the left shoulder. Hirah Singh stood looking at the dead man, a quiet smile on his dusky face.

"Shot in the back, poor chap," said a lieutenant of the line as he joined the native officer. "I wonder how that happened—a stray bullet, I suppose?"

"A dog's death for a dog," said Hirah Singh, turning on his heel, and slightly spurning the corpse with his heavy boot.

When Lady Violet, mourning her lost lover, turns for comfort to the letter sent from the front by Archie Yorke, there is one passage which she reads over and over again. "His end was the end of a hero."



BY MAUD COLEBORN.

I.

SHE certainly looked a weird, elfin-like figure, as she crouched in the draughty passage—a thin tartan shawl drawn tightly across her shoulders: her ruffled head, from which the grimy cap had fallen, pressed against the keyhole of the parlour door of Acacia Villa. On the other side of that door, Jack Barton, his violin tucked under his chin, was playing the overture to an opera which was to win for him name and fame in the musical world. There must have been something of the fire of genius in the music, for, as the exquisite sounds rose and fell, the face of Jack Barton's one listener became transfigured. She forgot that she was the maid-of-all-work at Acacia Villa, an underpaid, underfed drudge. The draughty passage, with its flaring gas jet, the smell of soapsuds, and the creak of Mrs. Hawkins' mangle—all were forgotten, as her soul floated away on the wings of music into a paradise of dreams.

"Drat the child! What do you mean by lying 'uddled up all of a 'eap at the lodger's door?"

It was Mrs. Hawkins' strident voice that brought that poor little dreamer, with a jerk, to earth. The golden visions vanished, and, in their place, was the red face of her mistress, her coarse features convulsed with rage, as she dragged the child to her feet.

"So this is where you 'ave been 'idin', is it? And me searchin' the 'ouse 'igh and low for someone to 'elp with the manglin', you lazy, good for nothin'——"



"Look at 'er, sir. There's a fine figger for a girl to look."

"Hullo! What's all the noise about? Is anything wrong, Mrs. Hawkins?"

The door of the parlour had opened suddenly, and Jack Barton, violin in hand, stood on the threshold.

He was a sunburnt young giant, with a close-cropped dark head, and good-tempered mouth. The chin was, if anything, a trifle too small, but the eyes were clear and honest, and gave the finishing touch to a face that most men, and all women, trusted instinctively.

There was a look of good-natured astonishment in his blue eyes as he glanced from the imposing figure of the landlady to the little shrinking figure in her grasp. Mrs. Hawkins made an attempt to conceal her irritation under an acid smile, as she answered:

"It's only Eliza Anne, sir. She fairly worrits my life out with 'er tire-some ways. When one takes an orphan out of charity, the least one can expect is that she will do 'er dooty, and not leave them as 'as been a mother to 'er with a pile of manglin' to be done while she sits outside on the mat listenin' to the fiddlin' of first floor lodgers! Look at 'er, sir. There's a fine figger for a girl to look, with 'er 'air all tossed about, and 'er eyes as dazed as any crazy Jane."

Jack Barton glanced compassionately at the culprit, who stood with downcast eyes, rubbing one ill-shod little foot over the other, and vainly endeavouring to conceal her frosty little elbows with the ends of the tartan shawl.

"Are you fond of music, Eliza?" he said.

The child jerked back her tumbled hair, and raised a pair of dark-lashed brown eyes, almost startling in their intensity of expression, as she answered, in a breathless whisper:

"Yes."

"Is those all the manners you can show? A answerin' of the gentlemen lodgers with never so much as a 'sir'?" said Mrs. Hawkins with an angry shake of the thin little arm, "and after me a tellin' you, till my jaw fairly aches again, that you——"

"There, there," interrupted Jack Barton hastily. "Run away, Eliza. I want to talk to Mrs. Hawkins for a moment."

The child gave him one look of adoring gratitude, then darted from the room, and, in a few moments, the energetic turning of the mangle testified to the genuineness of Eliza Anne's good resolutions.

II.

"How old are you, Eliza Anne?" said Jack Barton, a year later, pausing in the adjusting of a string to glance at the little silent figure by the hearth.

Eliza Anne's presence had become quite an institution during Jack Barton's evening practice, owing to the potency of a certain kind of argument with his fiery-faced landlady, which, whatever its morality in other respects, had opened the gate of paradise to the little overworked drudge.

"I don't know, sir."

"You don't know your own age, child?"

"No, sir; but Mrs. 'Awkins says I must be somewhere about thirteen or thereabouts, because I was about three years old when father left me with her while he went to foreign parts, and that must be nigh on ten years ago."

"I suppose you don't remember your father?"

"Not exactly, sir; but I seem to see someone who was dark and tall, and who spoke a different language from Mrs. 'Awkins, and called me——"

"Well?"

"It sounded like Margarita," said the child shyly.

"H'm, suits you a good deal better than Eliza Anne," said Jack Barton, and then, having adjusted his string, he took up his violin, and for the next hour the little parlour was filled with such melody as a man is only capable

of producing when he puts the best he has of youth's enthusiasm into his work.

Perhaps the consciousness of that absorbed audience of one, whose eyes positively shone with excitement and appreciation as he unfolded the outline of his great theme, had something to do with the enthusiasm with which he worked. Certain it is that during the last year he had grown to look for the child's instinctive sympathy. He no longer smiled to find the little spray of jasmine between the leaves of his music since the day when he had heard Mrs. Hawkins rating Eliza Anne for "wasting 'er time with them dratted flowers in the back garden," and had caught sight of the little figure hastily concealing the poor little smoke-begrimed posy beneath her apron.

How the child's eyes shone when he fastened the spray in his buttonhole before taking up his violin. Somehow the scent of jasmine seemed inextricably mixed up with the music of "Un Rêve d'Amour." It haunted him through the more tender passages, and mingled with the crash of exultant melody that thrilled in the *finale* when the work was at last completed.

Then followed a period of waiting, irksome enough even at first when the musician felt himself buoyed up with the confidence of ultimate success. But as the months dragged on and manager after manager refused even to look at the score of his cherished opera, or kept it for a while only to return it with a cold form of thanks, Jack Barton's courage began to flag.

So great was the change wrought by these months of fruitless effort that it would have been difficult to recognise cheery, good-tempered Jack Barton in the moody, careworn man whose very walk as he mounted the steps of Acacia Villa on this dull October afternoon betrayed the ill-success of his day's work. Silently and listlessly he opened the door of the sordid little house, hung up his hat, and laid his hand on the door of the dingy little parlour, when suddenly he paused in startled surprise at the flood of melody that greeted his astonished ears. Someone was singing the aria of the first act of "Un Rêve d'Amour."

It was someone whose voice rose in clear full tones or trilled in joyous cadences that seemed to emulate the careless rapture of a bird. There were no words, but that mattered little, the singer, whoever she was, had caught the spirit of his music, and Jack Barton's face flushed with pleasure as the clear tones rose higher and higher till they terminated in a sustained flute-like note that thrilled every fibre of the artist's soul as he stood on the threshold, wondering who the unknown singer could be.

When the last note had died away into silence, Jack Barton opened the door and strode eagerly into the room. It was empty save for the figure of Eliza Anne, who knelt on the hearthrug busily stirring the fire into a blaze.

For a moment Jack Barton's gaze searched the dim firelit corners of the little room then rested incredulously on the small kneeling figure. Could the singer have been this child? Impossible! The whole thing must have been a delusion of his tired brain? He had not tasted food for nearly twelve hours, and a curious feeling of numbness seemed to take possession of his faculties as he sank wearily into a chair by the hearth.

"Eliza Anne," he said suddenly, "was no one here just now? In this room, I mean? I thought I heard—singing, you know?"

For answer the child gave one startled glance into Jack Barton's pale overwrought face, then disappeared from the room like a flash to return in a few moments with a tray containing his evening meal.

"You are tired, sir," she said gently, "won't you take the chop, you must be needing something to eat?"

Jack shook his head—Mrs. Hawkins' chops were not appetising, and in any case he was not the least bit hungry. Eliza Anne glanced despairingly at him for a moment, then stepping swiftly to the little sideboard, re-appeared with a pint bottle of champagne which she opened clumsily enough, then said quietly:

"Drink this, please, sir."

Jack Barton tossed off a glass of the sparkling liquid, then set down the with a half laugh.

"By Jove, child, you are a wonderful little person, I feel better already; though how the dickens did you manage to get hold of champagne so

quickly? Ah, I remember, it's the bottle that we were to drink when the opera was accepted. Come along child, bring a glass, you shall have the champagne and—no, I tell you I can't eat," waving aside with an impatient gesture the plate the child was offering, "here fill your glass, we'll drink success to the music-hall pot-boiler and Miss Lily Darling, of the Varieties, and to the flames with 'Un Rêve d'Amour.'"

With a harsh laugh Jack Barton took up the roll of manuscript, and before the child had realised his intentions, had flung it into the heart of the fire.

With a sharp cry of horrified amazement, Eliza Anne dropped on her knees, and, regardless of the leaping flames, seized the bundle of papers and pressed the burning leaves between her bare hands.

"Oh, sir, you couldn't have meant to destroy your beautiful music," she said reproachfully. But Jack Barton's laugh was mirthless enough as he answered carelessly:

"All right; keep it yourself, Eliza Anne—it is yours by right as being the only appreciative listener, but for Heaven's sake keep it out of my sight! There go, child, I—I'm tired," he added irritably, and Eliza Anne crept out of the room, pressing the manuscript with both scarred hands against her breast.

Four hours later she was running swiftly along the deserted streets in the cold light of the early dawn in search of a doctor. Jack Barton was ill, and even fiery-faced Mrs. Hawkins was alarmed.

"Brain fever!" said the doctor ironically. "No friends to communicate with? H'm. Then we'd better get him off to the hospital at once." And before the real stir of life in the great city had begun, Eliza Anne was watching with tear-filled eyes the ambulance that was taking Jack Barton away from Acacia Villa for ever.

III.

It was a wild March evening ten years later. The wind whirled in sudden gusts round the street corners, bringing clouds of dust and little spurts of ice cold rain to greet the foot passengers who were making their way along the road.

"Hullo, Barton! Is that you?" said a cheery voice, as two men coming in opposite directions with lowered umbrellas cannoned violently against each other. "I haven't seen you for ages—have you been ill, old chap?"

"Ill, no; what put that into your head? Is it because I've got rid of a good deal of this 'too too solid flesh,' or because of my whitened locks?" returned Barton, with a sudden smile that recalled the cheery Jack Barton of ten years ago.

"Well, you are rather grey, I must say," answered the other hesitatingly; "But it's not exactly that, you look——"

"Older by a good ten years since the days when I worried your life out as a refractory patient at St. Peter's, eh, old man?"

"Yes, you certainly were not easy to deal with. I'm glad all brain fever patients don't insist on conducting an orchestra all night long. By the way, talking of music, are you going to see the new opera, 'Jasmine'?"

"Yes, I am on my way there now; they say this Margarita della Rocca is splendid in the title rôle."

"She is superb! She seems to feel every atom of the music to her finger tips, and to sing as if she did."

"It's odd that the opera should be anonymous, particularly when it has made such a hit. Queer title, too—'Jasmine.' By the way, have you ever heard anything of that devoted little admirer of yours? I mean the poor little soul with the strange dark eyes who used to come so regularly to the hospital when you were ill, and always left a spray of jasmine on your pillow?"

"No," said Jack musingly, as they paused in the porch of the Thalia Theatre. "I've often wondered what became of the poor child. The landlady told me some story of an Italian singing-master and his wife having taken a fancy to the child, and carried her off to Italy with them. Possibly they were relations, as I believe the child was of Italian origin; one seldom sees those eyes except—Hullo! what's the matter, old chap?"

"That's Margarita della Rocca," said Jack Barton's companion, in an excited whisper, as they stood aside to let a graceful woman, in a long trailing white cloak, pass up the steps.



For the next hour the little parlour was filled with melody.



He restored the fan.

For a moment a pair of lustrous dark eyes rested on Jack Barton's face, then the woman gave a sudden start, and a white feather fan she was carrying fell at his feet.

A vivid flush accompanied the *prima donna's* smile of thanks as he restored the fan, and she swept up the stairs, leaving Jack Barton speculating vaguely as to where he had seen those lustrous eyes and that radiant smile before.

"Isn't she splendid? If I hadn't a patient that I can't put off, I'd come in just to hear her sing the aria of the first act—it's the most telling thing in the whole opera! But I must be off—goodbye, old man!" and Barton's companion ran down the steps into the street, leaving him to make his way into the already crowded opera-house.

Still haunted by the recollection of those dark eyes, Barton took his seat as in a dream, till the opening bars of the overture roused him with a start.

What did it all mean? Surely that was his own music! The work over which he had toiled with boyish enthusiasm amid the sordid surroundings of Acacia Villa.

Then came the opening chords of the aria, and as the rich, full tones of the woman's voice rose and fell in exquisite cadence, and at last soared upward and ever upward into one full, pure burst of melody, Jack Barton ceased to see the radiant vision of womanly loveliness "in gloss of satin and shimmer of pearl," for the picture of a mean little room, with the frelight playing on a tumbled brown head and a pair of eyes with a world of pathos in their child-like depths. He was utterly unconscious of the storm of applause that burst from the audience when the curtain went down on the last act, and the cries of "Author, author," mingled with the shouts of enthusiasm that greeted the *prima donna*. Suddenly he was roused from his reverie by a touch on the shoulder, and a man's voice said hurriedly:

"Signorina della Rocca begs you will come at once, sir. The audience is getting impatient."

In another moment Jack Barton was standing beside the *prima donna*, acknowledging the enthusiasm of the crowd. He found himself confronting the vast sea of faces with unseeing eyes, and when at last the curtain went down again amid a thunder of applause, and he found himself alone with the beautiful Margarita della Rocca, it seemed as though the whole thing were a dream from which he should wake presently to the realities of life.

"I see you remember," said a soft voice, and two warm little hands were stretched out impulsively to meet his clasp.

"It's like a dream," said Jack Barton slowly, "to think that you, Margarita della Rocca, should be my little friend of Acacia Villa. I can't believe it somehow, and yet—"

"And yet it is true," said she, with a little girlish laugh. "The little grub, Eliza Anne, has developed into the butterfly Margarita della Rocca, and she owes it all to you. No, don't shake your head, I mean what I say. Of course," speaking rapidly, "I know Signor Castelli taught me to sing, but that was a lucky speculation for him as well as for me, but it was you—you alone—who taught me what music was."

"But I don't understand—" Jack Barton was beginning.

"Ah, about your opera, you mean. Do you remember how you flung the manuscript into the fire? The outer leaf with the title was burnt, and Eliza Anne couldn't remember it because her education with Mrs. Hawkins hadn't included an intimate acquaintance with French, so—so—I called it 'Jasmine.' But tell me," she demanded, in quick, eager tones, "why did you not answer my advertisements?"

"Your advertisements?" repeated Jack Barton, in bewildered tones.

"Yes, I advertised repeatedly in all sorts of ways for your address, and at last, when I could hear nothing of your whereabouts, I determined to produce the opera myself. I felt I should find you then. Do you know, it has been the dream of my life to give your music to the world, and now—there was a break in the soft voice, and the radiant eyes filled with tears as she added almost in a whisper—"and now the dream is fulfilled."

There was a moment's silence as Jack Barton stood with Margarita della Rocca's small hands clasped in his, and gazed into the eyes that still retained something of their innocent childlike trust, as she raised them to the grave face above her.

Then with a quick sigh, he released the little clinging hands as he said brokenly:

"Child, child! you call up a ghost of my dead self that mocks the man I have become."

"Don't say that," she interrupted eagerly. "You have your music. See what a reception the public have given to your opera, and when you are known—"

"You don't understand, child," he interrupted sadly. "I am known already—as a writer of music-hall melodies," he added, with a harsh laugh.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the girl, then with a little laugh: "Ah, yes, I remember, the pot-boilers! But we will change all that now! You shall write real music and I will sing it. They say Margarita della Rocca can interpret the works of genius. Do you consent to have her for a help-mate—in your work?"

For a moment a quick fire leapt into Jack Barton's eyes, kindled by the tremor in the witching voice as he seized the small hands and crushed them in his grasp. Then something in the childlike eyes recalled him to himself, as with a half sigh he said slowly:

"It's impossible, child; I must go on in the groove I have chosen, because—because my wife considers that kind of music pays best."

"Your wife!" repeated Margarita, and the words came slowly and heavily from her white lips. There was silence for a moment, then—

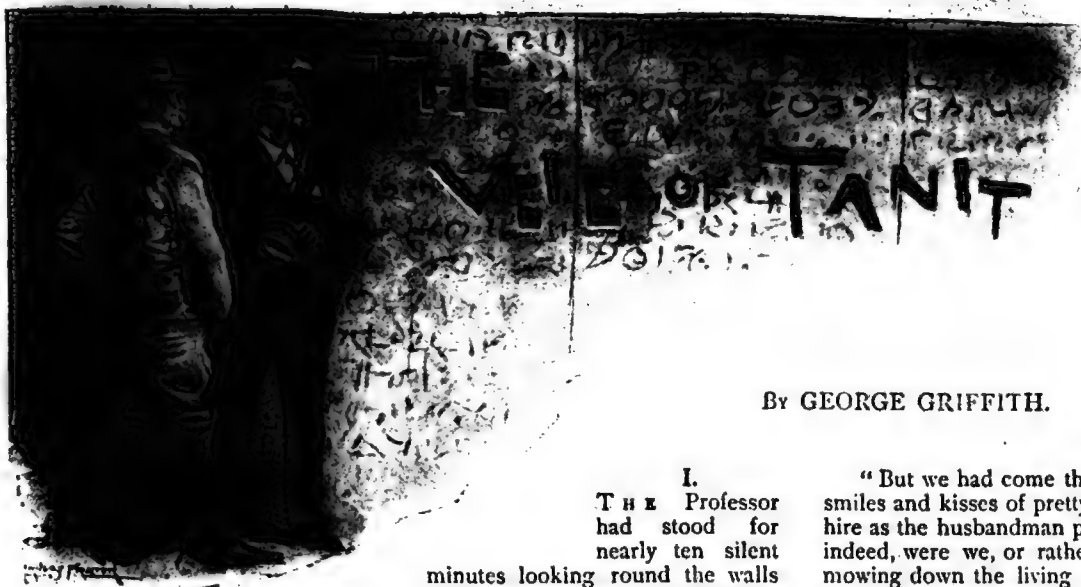
"You must introduce me to your wife, Mr. Barton," she said lightly. "Perhaps when I know her—"

"You know Miss Lily Darling already by repute—most people do," said he slowly, "so you will understand—"

A few minutes later Jack Barton was walking swiftly through the darkness, crushing a spray of jasmine in his clenched hand, while the vision of a bowed brown head and the sound of a woman's low sob seemed to haunt him like a dream.



"I see you remember," said a soft voice.



By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

I.
THE Professor had stood for nearly ten silent minutes looking round the walls of the newly-excavated chamber—walls made of great dressed slabs of hewn basalt, fitted together so closely that you could hardly put the blade of a knife between them, although they must have been standing there for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, and thickly covered with characters which strangely resembled the signs and symbols which we had found on other monoliths among the ruins of Tiahuanuco.

Tiahuanuco, as perhaps you know, is the name of a vast wilderness of ruins mostly composed of huge dressed and carved stones, lying about ten leagues to the south of Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world, whose waters lie at a level of 12,500 feet, surrounded by the mighty domes and peaks of the Upper Andes. Ever since its discovery during the Spanish Conquest this Nineveh of the New World had been a mystery. The people who had hewn and carved these stones had vanished so completely that all that the most learned archaeologist could say of them was that they had lived; that up here, some thirteen thousand feet above the waters of the Pacific, they had founded a great city containing temples and palaces, battlements and fortresses, whose ruins bore a strange resemblance to others that had been found near the shores of the Mediterranean, thousands of miles away.

We, that is to say my learned friend Professor Engelhardt and myself, had been working for several months in this ancient home of mystery. We had found many things, but nothing that had brought us nearer to the solution of the great problem: Who built Tiahuanuco, and raised temples whose foundations might have supported the stately fanes of Tyre and Sidon, and Carthage? Now, as though guided by some freak of Fate, we had set our Indians to excavate under an enormous slab of stone which looked like the architrave of some vast buried portal, and under this they had dug their way into a small square chamber. Into this we had brought our lamps and candles, and there we found the clue to the great secret.

"My friend," said the Professor, at last coming towards me and laying both his big hands on my shoulders, "my friend, we have found it! I was right! Did I not always tell you that the Greeks and the Phœnicians originated or re-invented everything, and that the Norsemen were the first to come to the New World? Look at those characters. You see, they are Syro-Phœnician, and the first name is a Norse one. Look, 'Hjalmar, the Viking.'"

I looked, but I did not see, simply because I could not read the characters; but I nodded and smiled, feeling, I must admit, a little awestricken the while, and said:

"I don't know about the Greeks and Phœnicians originating everything, but of course it is fairly certain now that the Norsemen were the first to land in North America."

"Yes, and in South America too," he went on, his voice more guttural than ever with excitement, "and they were here hundreds of years before they were there. My friend, we have made the greatest discovery since the Rosetta Stone was found, for these walls will tell us the origin of the Incas who, as I have always maintained, came from a Phœnician stock, mingled with one of the fair-haired races of the North—else how could they be the only brown race on earth whose aristocracy had fair hair and could blush?"

I did not attempt to question the proposition, for I knew my friend the Professor too well, and I was in too much of a hurry to learn the meaning of those signs on the strangely disclosed walls. But it took nearly a month of patient labour to remove the roof from the chamber, to photograph the walls, and then to excavate the great stones; and meanwhile the Professor translated the inscriptions one by one into Norwegian and German, growing if possible more ecstatic over every sentence that he deciphered, and I tried to turn his German translation into English—such English as seemed to me most nearly akin to the rugged, straightforward sentences in which the story was originally told. The story, as you will see, was a strange and vivid piece of old-world history re-told in the new world, and, after ages had passed, re-read and re-told once more as it is here by one of the same blood as the stark old hero who first caused it to be written.

"I, Hjalmar the Viking, was with Matho the African when we came

back from what the Latins called the Punic War. I was in the sea-fights of Mylæ and Ecnomus, and after that I was in the strong place of Eryx, where the great Hamilcar bade defiance to all the might of Rome. Then after the Roman victory among the islands of the Aegates, which had made his cause hopeless, I marched out with his army with all the honours of war, and in due time came with him to Carthage.

"Outside the great city we were received as victors, and they lodged us in tents in the Gardens of Hamilcar and fed us bounteously with fresh meats and luscious fruits and gave us so much good wine that when we had drunk our fill of it we bathed our war-worn bodies in what was left over.

"But we had come there for other things than meat and wine and the smiles and kisses of pretty slaves, for we were mercenaries, and fought for hire as the husbandman ploughs the field for his daily wage. Ploughmen, indeed, were we, or rather reapers, gathering in the red harvest of war, mowing down the living swathes with our swords and axes, and garnering the fruits in our pouches.

"We had sown the battle-fields of Italy and Sicily with our blood for Carthage, and now she denied us the fruit of our sowing; so we soon determined that if the Sea-Queen would not yield us our due, then should she herself and all the lands about her be the field where we would reap our harvest for ourselves.

"There had come an envoy to us from the Suffete Hanno to ask how we fared, and we sent him back to tell him and Carthage what it was in our minds to do, and the next day came Hanno himself, his great foul body borne in a litter—for he was a leper, and his swollen legs refused to carry him.

"But we told him, as we had told the envoy, neither more nor less, that Carthage should pay with her purse or her body, as was the custom in our own Northland, and when he went away with this message in his ears the chiefs of the Nations gave the command into the hands of Matho, and all that day and night the Gardens of Hamilcar were like a camp on the eve of battle. By dawn the next day, after we had taken a little sleep and a little meat and drink, for we were soldiers again now, we fell into our ranks, and awaited the answer to our message from the city.

"We watched the sun mount up the eastern sky, and still no message came; but we could see on the walls of the city men hurrying to and fro, as though preparing for defence, and the great gates, instead of opening as they were wont to do at sunrise, remained fast closed. So in all these signs we read that Carthage had lied to us by the mouth of her chief magistrate, and we made ready to take that which was ours, and good usury besides.

"It was a glorious sight, that great city, which lay there before our gaze as the sun came up behind us. It was the very reality of all the splendour and glory and wealth of the southern world; and that morning thrice ten thousand hungry eyes gazed on its glories, as a wild beast looks on its prey, and swords were unsheathed and flashed in the brightening sunlight, and a great shout went up from all the host of mercenaries:

"To Carthage! To Carthage! Lead on! lead on!"

"The Carthaginians watched us coming from their triple walls, some laughing at our foolishness, in the pride of their fancied strength, and some silent with fear of coming misfortune as they saw legion after legion defiling out of the gardens and marching silent and in perfect order to their appointed posts.

"By noon the city was beleaguered on all the landward sides. The great Hamilcar was away many days southward across the desert, quelling a revolt of the Numidian tribes. From the sea Carthage had nothing to hope for, for the Roman galleys had swept the Inland Sea from Sicily to the Pillars of Hercules, and the little that they had left had become the prey of the rovers whose hand was against every man and every nation.

"For seven days we lay without striking a blow, yet making a ring of brass and steel around the city through which no envoy could come or go between Carthage and the distant army of Hamilcar.

"Then Matho called a council in obedience to the murmurings of his soldiers, who were weary of withholding their hands from the rich prey that seemed to lie within their grasp, and sent messengers to the city to say that unless a ransom of ten thousand talents of gold were paid before the next sun rose he would cut the aqueduct that supplied the city with water, and wait until thirst had driven the Carthaginians mad, and then lead his men to the assault.

"The envoys went and returned; and that evening, as the full moon rose over our camp, the gate of Megara opened, and Salammbô, the daughter of Hamilcar, attended by her maidens and a long train of the priests of Tanit and Baal, came forth to intercede for the city and to make terms that should persuade us to leave Carthage in peace.

"No man in all our army had seen aught like that Canaanite maiden as she advanced to the tent of Matho, who stood at its door waiting to receive her. Her hair was gathered up into the form of a tower on her head, and sprinkled with golden dust, and long strings of priceless pearls hung thickly from the band of gold that circled her temples down to the dimples in her round, rosy cheeks. Her neck blazed with gems, and her arms, left bare

by her long black sleeveless tunic, glittered with bands of circling diamonds from the shoulder to the elbow.

"When Matho came forward to meet her I saw him stagger as though he had been struck a heavy blow, so overcome was he with her beauty and her splendid attire, and every soldier in the two lines through which she passed bowed his head in silent worship as he beheld her.

"I, standing by Matho, saw her, and was dazzled even as one who gazes on the sun at noonday; and then, as I stood aside for her to pass into the tent, my eyes fell upon one of her handmaidens, and as I beheld her the glory of the sun departed from my eyes, and the sweet, soft radiance of the moonlight fell like a balm upon them.

"I had seen the maidens of the East, and the West, and the North, and the South, and so far I had passed heart-whole by all of them. But now there stood before me a maid whose sunny eyes, deep shaded with long dusky lashes, shot the living fire of love into my soul as they looked towards me, and whose wondrous beauty, unadorned by gold or gems, fired my hot Viking blood with a mad, wild love, and burnt out of my soul every other longing save that which would only be stilled when I should clasp her in my arms and bear her forth with me as my bride, to be my queen and my sweet minister in some solitude that should be Heaven because she was there.

"She passed into the tent with Salamambo and the priests, and for nearly an hour we remained on guard outside, waiting for them to come forth. When they at length came it seemed to me as though the night was far spent, so great was my longing to set eyes on that fair maiden again.

"At the parting of the tent doors we swung back into our lines again, and as they came forth Salamambo stopped and raised her hand to Heaven, turning her race towards the new-risen moon, and spake aloud some words in Punic; and when she ceased speaking, Spendius, the Greek, who was our interpreter, knowing all the tongues of the North and South, raised his hand for silence, and translated what she had spoken for us that all might know how the matter had ended.

"Listen, O soldiers of the Nations!" said he, 'to the meaning of the words that have fallen from the lips of the beautiful Salamambo, the daughter of the great and mighty Hamilcar Barca! Your chiefs have demanded from the city ten thousand talents in gold in payment of all our arrears, and in ransom of the town now cut off from all help by land and sea.

"The words that Salamambo spake just now in your hearing were the words of her oath, sworn by Baal and the Sacred Veil of Tanit, that by noon to-morrow the money shall be paid in good gold and silver, and that the ships shall be ready to bear us from Carthage wherever we shall wish to go. Behold, unto this hath the daughter of Hamilcar pledged her faith and that of the city, and called down upon it and her the vengeance of the eternal Gods if her oath be broken."

"As Spendius ceased speaking our swords leapt from their scabbards and flashed aloft in the torch-light, and a deep, hoarse cheer rolled down our lines and went echoing away from squadron to squadron as the good news spread, till all Carthage was encompassed in the sound.

"Yet I gave but little heed to the news or the cheering, for my thoughts were far away from pay or treasures of gold and silver, and my soul was full of the beauty of the fair handmaiden of Salamambo. Then there rose up within me a deep, wild longing to bid farewell for ever to the hot, stifling Punic plains and the labours of war under that burning southern sun, and to take just one of the brave galleys from the harbour, and fill it with my own gallant Norsemen, and steer forth once more on the clear blue waters to battle and plunder worthy of the sons of the Northland.

"The next day came, and with it the news that the Council of the Rich had held a sitting in the night, and had resolved to risk their gold on the hazard of war rather than to give it to us in just payment, and to await the coming of Hamilcar for deliverance. Thus did those false and greedy traders belie the words that they had spoken by their envoys and the oath of Salamambo, which she had sworn in our hearing by the door of the tent of Matho.

"A council of the chiefs of the Nations was held, and it was decided to cut the aqueduct at sundown that evening, and to make all preparations for an assault on the gates the next day. That afternoon Spendius came to my tent, where I sat alone dreaming of the hopelessness of my love for the handmaid of Salamambo, and said to me in the Latin tongue:

"Hjalmar of the Northland, I have come to speak with thee on matters of moment to thee and thy people. Are we alone? For none but thou must hear what I have to say —"

"Thou canst speak on without fear," I said, 'for there is no one w thin earshot.'

"Then, listen," said he, coming close to my side, and speaking almost in a whisper. 'The Rich were wise not to give us the promised pay, for Hamilcar will be here before the city can be reduced, and then we shall be between him and the walls, and if we are crushed, as is almost certain, we shall be treated as enemies of the Republic, and instead of gold and silver, we shall be paid with steel and fire.

"I have spoken of this to Matho, and sought to persuade him to make easier terms with the city, and to let those of the mercenaries as wish to do so go home, leaving the rest to take service with Hamilcar if they choose.

"But Matho is mad with love for the Suffete's daughter, and he swears that he will storm the city, and carry her off with him to Lybia to be his queen. This is madness, and will be the ruin of the army. Wherefore I am of opinion that the time has come for each one to seek his own profit and safety, and if thou wilt join with me in the scheme that I will presently unfold, it shall be greatly to thy profit and that of thy brave Norsemen.

"Thou hast heard of the Veil of Tanit, that by which Salamambo swore last night in the camp. Now that is the Veil of the Goddess Tanit, which is hidden away in the depths of the temple, and on which it is death for any one but a priest to look. The Carthaginians believe that upon their possession of this Veil the favour of the goddess and the safety of the city depend.

"Now I was three years a slave in Carthage before the Suffete took me as interpreter to the East, and if thou wilt I will lead thee into the city, ay, into the very secret place of the Temple of Tanit itself, and thou shalt take the Veil from the idol, and load thyself with treasures of gold and jewels enough for thee and all thy men, who shall have orders to await us by the Malqua Gate, which we will open in the night, and admit them to the harbour. Then we will seize the best of the galleys and put to sea, and leave these foolish ones to their fate."

"For many minutes I pondered over his words, and then through the clouds of my doubts there flashed the light of a high resolve and a desperate venture, and, taking the Greek by the hand, I said to him, looking him full in the eyes:

"It is a bold exploit, Spendius, for two men to enter a great city and carry off its greatest treasure from the midst of it. But by its very boldness it may succeed, and if thou canst lead me unperceived into the town, I will answer for my part of the enterprise. But now tell me wherefore thou hast come to me with this scheme of thine, and what reward thou wilt ask when it is carried through?"

"First, because I have sought to persuade Matho to do it with me, and he is too blind with love of Salamambo, and too much afraid of the fancied terrors of Tanit to make the venture. Second, because thou hast thrice saved my life, and hast treated me as a man and not a slave, and because I know that thou hast no fear of these false gods of the Phoenicians.

"As to reward, I want none but my freedom and a fair share of the treasure that we shall take from the temple. If Hamilcar comes back and finds me here in arms against the city, he will buy me of Matho and crucify me, since, as thou knowest, I am a revolted slave. Are those not reasons enough?"

"I am satisfied," said I, 'and I will make the venture. My men shall be ready at the gate by sundown, and thou hast but to say where I shall meet thee for the attempt.'

"Good," said the Greek, clapping me once more by the hand. 'Thou art worthy of thy sea-king's blood, and the venture will succeed if thou wilt swear to do blindly that which I tell thee to do.'

"By the Hammer of Thor and Igdrasil the Life-tree, I swear it!" I replied, willing to dare any danger to carry out the desperate resolve I had formed in my heart. 'Only I must have one condition from thee, and that is that if we seize the Veil, it shall be my share of the spoil, and that thou shalt aid me to dispose of it in barter as I will.'

"The Greek looked at me searchingly for a moment, and then said: 'The condition is a just one, and I will keep it so far as the gods shall give me life and strength to do so. Now to my plan. As soon as the sun's rays touch the copper dome of the Temple of Tanit, meet me between the ninth and tenth arches of the aqueduct. Be lightly armed and wear no body armour. Bring only thy sword and a pair of good daggers, and leave the rest to me.'

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II.

"I reached the appointed place unobserved at the moment that the copper cupola was blazing in the level rays of the descending sun. I had unfolded to my men as much of the plan as it was necessary for them to know, and they had sworn to see the venture through to the death. As soon as the sun set they were to steal in twos and threes to the gate and



"Salamambo stopped and raised her hand to Heaven."

conceal themselves about it, making no sign of their presence till they heard my battle-cry from within. That would tell them that we had pulled the levers and that the gate would yield to them.

"Spendius joined me at the appointed moment.



Then we clambered up."

He was armed with a short iron pike and also carried a sharp iron hook tied to the end of a long knotted rope. Whirling this above his head like a sling, he hooked it in the cornice above the first of the five tiers of arches of which the aqueduct was composed. Then we clambered up and, in like manner and after much labour and risk of falling back, we reached the top-most tier.

"Then Spendius with his pike prized up one of the roofing-stones, disclosing the dark water rushing like a mill-race beneath. I saw his plan, and for a moment my heart stood still at its daring. Then I thought of her whom I was going to seek and followed him without a word as he vanished into the dark hole.

"The water reached to our middles at first and

soon it got deeper and we were carried off our feet and forced to swim for our lives with the swift, cold current. Ever and anon we were dashed

against the roof of the rough stone sides and sorely bruised. Then the air grew close and heavy, and we could hardly breathe.

"So, bruised and choking for air, we were hurled along by the swift current like arrows through the darkness. Then the water began to roar and boil in our ears, and we were sucked down into the depths. For a moment I lost my senses, fighting for breath, and then I came to myself floating on my back in what seemed to be a vast vaulted chamber.

"From hence we were hurried on the smooth surface of the swiftly-flowing water until the chamber narrowed to a sluice, and through this we shot with fearsome speed into a broad, open basin beyond. For a few moments we lay on our backs, refreshing ourselves with deep breaths of the pure, cool air, and then we swam to the side and swung ourselves out on to the parapet which surrounded the tank.

"We were in Carthage, and beneath us the great city lay like a dim wilderness of groves and palaces and temples, while far beyond on the plain outside we could see the watch-fires of the Mercenaries twinkling like stars in the distance.

"We found a door, which we forced with our daggers, and when we had passed through this we stood at the top of a flight of steps, down which we ran, and then threaded our way swiftly and silently through the gardens at the foot towards the Acropolis. We reached the western slope unobserved, and there before us spread out the vast black mass of the Temple of Tanit—silent as a tomb, clothed in mystery and darkness, for the period of the rites was over until the next month, and the temple was deserted save by a few priests.

"We leapt the low wall of the first inclosure, and gained the second. Then, passing through an open grating, we reached two long porticos flanking a square tower, at the four corners of which were vases full of burning spices that made the air heavy with their oppressive fumes. We passed through one of the porticos into a vast chamber, whose open roof admitted the light of the stars that were beginning to twinkle out of the dark vault beyond. In the middle of this chamber was a huge and hideous idol in the form of a gross, leering woman, fat and bearded, sitting with crossed hands and black, protruding knees, worn smooth by the kisses of her votaries.

"This was the image of Tanit which the people were permitted to see. Beyond, at the end of a long corridor, was the Sanctuary itself, guarded by an ivory gate, beyond which only the priests might pass. Above this we spied a narrow space, just large enough for a man to force his body through. I stood against the gate, and Spendius mounted my shoulders and scrambled through the opening. Then he let the rope down to me, and I climbed up after him.

"We were now in a vast, dimly-lighted hall, in which was another great image of a woman, draped in long blue robes studded with diamonds and

braided with golden chains. By the light of a little lamp that burned at the feet of the figure, we rapidly stripped the jewels off the robe of the goddess, and thrust them into our tunics. Each of the great hands of the idol was heaped with pearls and rubies and sapphires, worth the ransoms of a dozen kings. We took them all, but left the chains, for they would be heavy to carry, and, moreover, compared with the jewels, the gold seemed as dross to us.

"From this chamber we passed through a hanging tapestry into another that was filled with an unearthly wavering light. All about were strange living forms, that crawled and writhed and ran over the smooth floor, and floated on huge wings through the heavy air.

"In the midst of the hall were twelve blue crystal globes, supported on tiger-like monsters with staring jewelled eyes, and in the midst of these, throned on an ivory chariot, was the supreme goddess herself, Tanit, the Daughter of the Stars, clothed in Tyrian purple and gold, and blazing with luminous gems.

"But the glory of the idol was as nothing to that which hung behind her chariot from a great golden rod suspended from the roof by gleaming chains. It looked like a thin cloud, through which shone stars of many colours, arranged in strange symbolic figures. As the uncertain light fell upon it, it seemed to wave and undulate, taking all the colours of the rainbow, now blue, now yellow, now purple—most marvellously beautiful of all the fabrics on earth.

"Behold it!" whispered the Greek, pointing to it, 'the Veil of Tanit, the sacred Zaimph itself, on which no mortal may look and live.'

"For a moment I gazed entranced upon its beauty, then swiftly mounting the chariot and climbing up on the shoulders of the idol, I loosened it from the bar and let it fall in a mass of shimmering splendour upon the floor of the temple.

"I leapt down to seize it, and as I did so my foot pressed a movable stone, and the next moment the crystal spheres revolved, the monsters roared, and a wave of unearthly melody flooded the hall. We both stood still, appalled for the instant with the sense of the sacrilege that we had committed. Then a door in the wall opened and a pale priest appeared, gazing wide-eyed and speechless upon us.

"Before he had time to utter a cry, Spendius darted across the floor, clapped one hand over his mouth and with the other drove a dagger to his heart. He dropped without a sound on the pavement, and then we stripped the idol of the largest and most precious jewels, and when these were safe in our tunics I rolled up the Zaimph, knotted it about my body, and said to the Greek:

"Now let us begone. The Veil is mine and I would barter it forthwith for that which is more precious in my eyes. Lead me to the chamber of Salamambo in the palace of Hamilcar!"

"To Salamambo!" he gasped, as though he had not heard aright. 'Art thou mad that thou wouldst bring the whole city upon us?'

"I came here with thee on one condition," I said in reply, 'and thou hast sworn to obey it even to the cost of thy life. Lead on! No Carthaginian dare lay hands on him who is robed in the Veil of Tanit. When they see it they will flee to hide themselves. Lead on, therefore, and fear not!'

"As I spoke I unwound the Zaimph from my waist and cast it about my shoulders like a mantle. Then I strode up to one of the great mirrors of polished copper in the wall of the Sanctuary, and in it I beheld rather the form of a god than of a man, for I was transfigured by that glorious robe of woven mist and starlight, and even the careless Greek himself bowed down before me as though in worship, and said humbly.

"It shall be as my lord wills! Let us go, and may the eternal gods protect us!"

"So saying, he led the way swiftly back through the chambers and



"Spendius clapped one hand over his mouth, and with the other drove a dagger to his heart."

corridors that we had traversed, opening the ivory gate without difficulty from the inside. When we got out into the city there were but a few stragglers here and there in the streets, and such as saw us shrank back in fear from the shimmering robe that I wore, believing me to be some unearthly visitant.

"We passed swiftly through the Tanners' Street and the Square of Muthumball, and the Vegetable Market and the Road of Cynasyn, which led us to the mansions of Megara and the gardens of the palace of Hamilcar, which rose in a vast pyramid before us, lit up by the glare of the great light-house on the cliff beyond.

"High on the summit of the pyramid was a little domed chamber, from the windows of which streamed the soft glow of a subdued radiance. It was the chamber of Salammbo, where she slept surrounded by her slaves, and there I should find her for whom alone I would exchange the priceless Veil of Tanit.

"Course after course we swiftly scaled the dark side of the huge pyramid, till we paused breathless for a moment on the summit. The door was closed by heavy curtains of purple. With a beating heart but a firm hand I put them aside and entered, closely followed by the Greek.

"A silver lamp, shaped like a Punic galley, swung from the gilded cedar roof, and at the far end of the chamber hung a great, square bed of cedar, draped with azure cloth, and suspended by four thick chains of gold. Beneath, on an ivory couch, swathed in snowy linen, lay the sleeping form of the maiden of my dreams.

"Breathless and on tip-toe I advanced to the hanging bed, and peering over beheld the queenly shape of Salammbo, her royal head pillowed in purple, and her white jewelled arms lying listless on the azure coverlet. I bent my mouth down to her ear and whispered loudly the one word 'Tanit!'

"Instantly she rose up sitting in the swaying bed, supported by one arm and with the other hand shading her lambent eyes, still dazed with sleep, from the glory of the Zaimph.

"Tell her," said I to Spendius, "that if she speaks aloud or cries out she shall be slain, and the Veil taken for ever from Carthage. Then tell her that I will give it to her in exchange for her slave and her promise to make no alarm for an hour."

"The Greek did as I bade him, and as he spoke the sweet-faced slave turned on her couch, and her long lashes rose from her cheeks, and her great violet eyes stared at me in wonderment and fear for one brief space. Then her rosy lips parted in a smile, and she said in sweet, pure Gothic:

"Welcome, my lord, my sea-king! I have waited for thee long in my dreams, and yesterday I saw thee, and now thou art here. Hlasford hael!"

"Then she passed her white hands across her eyes and sank back, still dreaming, upon her pillow.

"The next moment Salammbo recognised the Veil from the speech of Spendius. With eyes widened with horror she gazed upon its forbidden glories for an instant, then with a loud, shrill scream she fell back fainting on her couch, and the lovely slave, roused by her cry, sprang to her feet, and stood staring in terror at us.

"There was not a moment to be lost, for already cries were sounding outside and feet were pattering on the pavement, hurrying towards the chamber. Quick as thought I tore off the Veil, flung it around the form of the Gothic maid, swung her over my left shoulder, and, drawing my sword with my right hand, dashed at the curtained door, slashing blindly right and left at all who barred my way.

"Spendius followed close behind, using his pike and dagger right manfully, crying in Punic as he ran:

"Way for the daughter of Tanit and her Lord of the Seven Planets! Look not on the Veil lest ye die! Away! away!"

"As he cried out the crowd parted in awe before us, and we passed through like a flash of light into the open air. Then, bounding from tier to tier of the pyramid, we vanished into the darkness beneath.

"Through street after street we sped silent and swift, loud cries of alarm sounding behind us and lights flashing out in every direction. Behind us pressed a crowd of mingled priests and soldiers and women, uttering cries of rage and lamentation for the ravished Zaimph. But we distanced them apace and reached the Malqua Gate in safety.

"It was unguarded, for no man dreamed of an assault from within. Laying the maid on a bench, I seized the lever with Spendius, at the same time shouting my Norse battle-cry. It was answered from without, and as the lever descended we heard the clash of armour against the outer side, as my brave fellows flung themselves upon it. It swung slowly open, and in an instant we were surrounded by a hundred gleaming bucklers and flashing swords.

"To the quay!" yelled Spendius, pointing with his pike and darting down the road towards the harbour. I picked up the maid again and ran along swiftly at the head of my men.

"At the harbour we were met by a crowd of sailors and fishermen, shouting and brandishing clubs and rude weapons. We swept our way through them like fire through a cornfield, and, as they scattered, my men rushed to the water's edge and pushed off in boats to a tall galley that was lying half a bow-shot from the shore. They boarded her, cutting down the few of her crew that were left on board and flinging their bodies into the water.

"I and half a score who were left with me sought to follow them, but by this time a crowd of priests and soldiers had overtaken us and cut off our path to the water. I glanced round for a way of escape and saw a high stone jetty running out into the harbour. If I could gain the end of that my men would bring the galley round to it and I could board from there.

"My sword was broken, but one who had given his life for me lay dead at my feet, still grasping his double-bladed battle-axe. I stooped down and wrenched it from his hand. Then I swung it aloft, shouting to the few men who were still left with me to close up behind, and hewed my way through the crowd to the shoreward end of the jetty.

"Once there I swung round, hurled my battle-axe in the faces of the foremost foes, clasped the maid tightly in my left arm, and with her, still swathed in the Zaimph, leapt clear of the jetty far out into the water.

"Down together we plunged deep into the dark, warm water, and as I rose again with a mighty effort to the surface, I heard the measured splash and creak of the oars as the galley forged towards us. Then strong hands gripped us tight, and drew us on board, I gasping for breath, and spitting the salt water out of my mouth, and the maid cold and rigid in a death-like trance.

"I drained a bowl of wine that someone held out to me, and then I bore my precious burden to the little after-cabin, where I chafed her cold, white limbs, and forced strong fiery wine into her mouth until she gasped for breath, and opened her great eyes like one who wakes from long dreaming. Then I kissed her, and wrapped her in soft warm furs, and bade her sleep in peace and safety.

"On the floor beside me lay in a shining heap the magic Veil, for which I had dared so many terrors that night. As soon as the maid fell asleep I took it up and left the cabin. We had cleared the harbour, and my stout fellows were bending gallantly to the oars, sending the galley swirling through the dark water. I looked at the myriad lights of Carthage, already sinking lower over the waves, and then aloft. The sky was as black as the night of Niffelheim, and all the stars that had shone so brightly an hour ago were blotted out by the darkness. In the pride of my triumph I spread the Zaimph out to the breeze and cried aloud:

"Farewell, Carthage! Farewell, Tanit, Daughter of the Stars! Thy Veil shall make a brave wedding garment

for the bride of Hjalmar the Viking!"

"Two Carthaginian galleys, hastily manned, set out in chase of us, and when we were well out to sea we slackened our rowing and then turned and fell upon them. One we sank with our sharp, brazen beak, and the other we took with sword and axe. We kept the slaves in the galley that was saved, and those of the Carthaginians that we had left alive we made slaves to row our own galley—and so our two longships went on till we passed the Pillars of Hercules. Then a great storm came down on us and drove us away from the coast, and we should have died of hunger and thirst had we not sighted some fair islands as the storm abated. There we refreshed ourselves and, not knowing where we were, we filled our ships with provisions ad water and started forth on an unknown sea-path towards the setting sun. After many days we came to a land of vast rivers and forests, and when we had ascended a great river for many hundreds of leagues we came to mountains such as no man had ever seen before. These we crossed. We warred with native tribes and my men took such of their women for wives as they fancied, until at length we came here to the shores of the Sea of the Mountains and built the Great City—"

Here, to the exasperation and despair of the Professor, the inscription abruptly ended. The rest of that slab and six more which completed the walls of the room were blank. What misfortune or catastrophe prevented its completion no one can now ever know. It may have been a transcript of the story of Hjalmar inscribed long after the death of the pioneer hero, and it may be that, in the calamity which overwhelmed the Great City, the Writer on Stone was slain and the secret of his lore and his art lost. It may be that the Rainbow Banner which for centuries waved over the conquering armies of the Incas was at once a memory and a symbol of the sacred Veil of Tanit. It may be that the son and daughter of the Sun who founded the divine line of the Incas were Hjalmar of the Northland and the fair-haired bride whom he ravished from the palace of the great Hamilcar—but over all this the mist and darkness of the heaped-up centuries has fallen and no man can now tell what the truth may be.



"I hurled my battle-axe in the faces of the foremost foes."

Paul Henderson's Adventure

By BASIL TOZER.

I.

WHEN my father, Eustace Drake, handed me a fifty-pound note and bade me go about my business, I made a false move, for I adopted the evil trade of journalism.

Nearly all vagrants become journalists at one or other period of their existence. Some ultimately succeed, some take to drink, some are remanded on bail. For my part I merely became the assistant editor in Paris of the *Galignani Messenger*, in the office of which nocturnal newspaper* I one night came face to face, for about the tenth time, with an individual whose personality I had gradually come to look upon as in some way connected with or influenced by my own.

For assuredly it was more than passing strange—it must be more than mere coincidence, I reflected—that this man should so often cross my path; yet that I should never even have heard his voice. And, indeed, it seemed as though I never should hear it, for a few hours later I was told that the individual, whose name I discovered to be Paul Henderson, had just left Paris.

Three years passed. During that time I drifted. By about the end of that time I drifted into San Francisco. Some six months later I was drifting across the Pacific towards the Sandwich Isles.

It was, I remember, on a lovely afternoon in November that I stood leaning lazily over the bulwark of the O. and O.S.S. *Coptic*, smoking an excellent regalia and carelessly watching the unfortunate steerage crowd preparing for their evening meal; when suddenly I recognised a shabbily-dressed individual slouching up the steerage companion. The man was Paul Henderson himself. Some minutes later I strolled as if by accident into the steerage quarters, and, upon the first favourable opportunity, I openly accosted him. He turned, but did not seem surprised. On the contrary, he merely scanned my face inquiringly for a moment, and then his own expression and features relaxed. Presently a wan smile flickered over his lips. I knew then that he recognised me, and instinctively I extended my hand.

"You remember me?" I asked in a friendly tone, for somehow I felt drawn towards the strange fellow.

"Quite well," he answered.

So at last I heard his voice. It was deep and resonant—rather a pleasant voice.

"How far do you go?" he asked, after a moment's pause.

"I disembark at the Islands—at Honolulu," I replied.

"Do you stay long in Oahu?"

"A week. Not more. Then I go on to Hawaii."

I thought he looked pleased when I had said this, but he seemed a strange man—a man whose feelings must be difficult to gauge accurately, I reflected.

"I mean to travel round the Islands at my leisure," I continued, anxious to draw him out, yet unwilling to seem inquisitive.

"I mean to stay there for life," he said sharply.

"Indeed?"

"For life," he repeated with emphasis.

"Have you stopped scribbling, then?" I asked, for I knew that three years previously he, too, had been a journalist.

He looked at me keenly for a moment.

"Yes," he answered abruptly.

We talked in this somewhat strained manner for a little while longer; then I left him. I felt puzzled. The man was of gentle birth, of that I was convinced; but he must be desperately poor to be compelled to travel steerage. Could his life conceal some mystery? I inclined to this theory, and my curiosity became aroused.

On the following day I visited him again, and stayed talking with him for an hour or more. On the third day of the voyage I went down into the steerage quarters in the afternoon as well as in the morning, and by the time we had been four clear days at sea my strange friend had thawed

towards me considerably. I had tried hard on the third day of our acquaintanceship to make him consent to my paying for him the difference in fare on a first-class ticket as far as Honolulu, but, though thanking me warmly, he had obstinately refused to entertain the suggestion, though reluctantly consenting to accept from me a suit of clothes, which I pressed him to take merely because he seemed so utterly destitute.

Then, as we entered latitudes still warmer, and the sea became smoother and smoother, I took to sitting out with him on the steerage deck after sundown; and there, in a secluded corner concealed by an immense coil of rope from the inquisitive stare of the steerage crowd, and smoking peacefully, we grew more and more intimate, and he became more and more confidential, so that, on the night before we sighted land, I dragged out of him, bit by bit, the story of his hidden trouble, the history of the great grief of his past life.

Educated at Harrow, and afterwards at Magdalen, he had, I discovered, some twenty years previously, been well known in London society. His name, as I had rightly supposed since I spoke to him, was not Henderson at all, though Paul was his true first name. In early life he must, I gathered, have been a comparatively wealthy man, for he had then owned a house in Mayfair, and, he mentioned incidentally, a chalet near Lucerne, and he had been wont to devote three months in the year to yachting in the Mediterranean. Then he had married. His wife was at that time considered one of the loveliest and most fascinating women in Dublin, and when, the year before her union, she had come to London to be presented, all society had raved about her.

At that point in his narrative, I remember, he paused. Presently he continued, and I shall relate in his own words, so far as I can, what he said:—

"We meant to go to America for our honeymoon, but we changed our minds, because my wife was so anxious to see Japan. Therefore we went first to Cairo, thence, *via* Ceylon and Singapore, to Hong Kong, and then on to Nagasaki."

When he spoke of his wife he seemed greatly overcome, even distressed mentally, but I pretended not to notice his agitation, and he went on:—

"What I am about to relate to you, Mr. Drake, I have never told to any other living being. I couldn't tell it to anyone but you. I tell it to you because, somehow, I like you—because, somehow, you seem sympathetic. If only you knew what I have suffered during all these years! But I deserved it all—all; I deserve more, much more."

I remained silent, and presently he went on again:—

"I have told you I was on my honeymoon tour. Well, we had already been away from England for about six months, so we decided to travel in Upper Japan for another six months, and then return direct to Europe by way of America. On New Year's Day—how well I remember it!—we embarked at Yokohama on board the *Numismada*, bound for Vancouver by way of the Hawaiian instead of the Aleutian Isles, as my wife wanted to see Maunaloa and Kilauea. I think on the very day we started my wife began to feel anxious or nervous, for I remember her coming in, and telling me she had a presentiment that some catastrophe was impending. However, I reassured her by reminding her that the *Numismada* was one of the very finest Pacific Ocean steamers afloat, and I think I really laughed her fears quite away.

"At first all went well, but on the eleventh or twelfth day of the voyage, just as we were congratulating some of the officers on the lovely weather they had given us, wind began to rise. As I went out on deck I noticed that the black columns of smoke which the funnel was vomiting forth beat right down across the port bow. Steadily the wind increased, and gradually we realised that a terrific storm was sweeping down upon us—a 'bastard typhoon,' I heard someone call it, which, as you probably know, is a typhoon at the wrong season of the year, and always the worst of any. Already the Islands were in sight, but for three days and three nights the *Numismada*, though battling bravely with the elements, made hardly any headway at all. The crisis came at about noon on the third day of the storm, when we heard a fearful crash, and knew soon afterwards that the

*In those days the *Messenger* went to press at 6 a.m.

bridge, with the Captain and the first officer upon it, had been carried overboard. Half-an-hour later the furnace became extinguished, and we realised that our time had come."

Henderson remained silent and quite still for a minute or more, pondering deeply, and gazing out across the now placid ocean. As he glanced up at the starlit sky, before continuing, a bright ray from an adjacent porthole shone across his face, and I saw that his eyes were moist.

"Quickly I stumbled out of the saloon," he resumed, with a gulp,



"I staggered along the alleyway."

"where many of the male passengers were huddled together, some of them praying, some cursing, the majority too terrified to do either, and with difficulty I scrambled down the companion, and staggered, as best I could, along the alleyways, where everything was in the utmost confusion, and where women, some of them hugging tiny children to their breasts, were openly giving way to despair. Without, the storm, raging fiercer than ever, could be heard above the almost deafening clatter of shattered crockery, the slamming of doors hanging loosely on their hinges, the deep rumble of the useless rudder chains, the eternal creaking of the vessel's timbers, and at intervals the heartrending cries of women and children.

"Then, of a sudden, the roar of the ocean subsided, only to be followed an instant later by a report like a cannon-shot, as an immense sea struck the vessel broadside, making her throb and shudder from stem to stern like some great creature in agony. After that we felt that she was sinking, lower, lower, lower still, forced downward by the sheer weight of water which covered her completely and could be heard rolling off her decks like a mighty cataract. Gradually she rose again, but as she did so she began slowly to keel over, and at that moment I reached my cabin. As I grasped the handle, the door burst inward and I nearly tumbled headlong into the arms of my wife, who, sobbing hysterically and wringing her hands, now began to implore me frantically, in piteous accents, to help her—to save her.

"Then—then it was that in an access of terror, of panic, of cowardice, call it what you will, I committed the atrocious crime of my life, for, without a moment's hesitation, I turned upon my wife, and wresting from her the cork jacket she was clutching in her nerveless grasp, I struggled into it myself, and, with her wild cry of anguish ringing in my ears, I tore back alone along the alleyways and clambered up the companion."

He stopped. Great drops of perspiration were starting from his pallid brow, and the moon, now slowly rising, showed them shining clearly, like dew upon a corpse. Suddenly he pressed his fingers hard upon his eyes, as though to shut out some horrid dream.

"Almost as I reached the saloon deck," he continued huskily, "I saw through the door, now open, that a boat was being lowered, and in the frenzy which possessed me I rushed out towards it. As I reached the boat, a woman with wet, dishevelled hair streaming over her face was striving to hoist her child into it, but I caught her roughly from behind, and she fell with her child back upon the deck. Almost at the same moment another great sea thundered right over the vessel, wrenching the lifeboat in the stern from its davits, and instantly carrying it away."

Just then the siren above us shrieked out on the still night air, signalling a passing vessel whose lights we could faintly discern in the thickening gloom, and the sound made him start as though someone had struck him. Then signal lights were exchanged, so that for a few moments our attention was diverted.

"And how were you saved?" I asked at length.

"When I regained consciousness," he continued, "I was on board a German trading vessel bound for Europe *via* the Horn. I soon gathered that the *Numismada* had been driven almost on to the coast of Hawaii, close to Apua, which lies quite at the south of the island—so you see how far we had been carried out of our course—and that she had there foundered with all hands. For over an hour, the German Captain said, his ship had endeavoured to render assistance, but in vain. So close, indeed, he added, was the ill-fated *Numismada* to Apua, which is situated on a very dangerous part of the coast where many shipwrecks had occurred before, that nearly all the bodies of the passengers and crew must have been washed

ashore. He told me, too, that a cemetery had been marked out somewhere near there, only a few years previously, in which the bodies of all persons drowned at sea and washed ashore on Hawaii were buried."

"But about yourself?" I interrupted.

"The Captain had seen me floating in the water with several others, and had succeeded in hauling us aboard. I was still just living, though apparently stunned by some blow on the head. The rest were dead. He considered my escape, he said, nothing short of a miracle—a miracle aided by a cork jacket. As he uttered the last two words I fell back prostrate, for the truth in all its hideous nakedness had flashed into my mind, and for the first time in my existence I despised myself utterly, as I have done ever since."

He paused, quite overcome, and remained silent for several minutes.

"Well?" I inquired.

"It was then January," he continued abruptly. "We should not reach Europe until several months later, the German Captain told me. 'Meanwhile,' he added, 'you had better lie quiet and try to regain strength.' Strength! What did I need strength for? And again I cursed the fate that had spared my life—spared the life of perhaps the greatest coward that has ever existed, while it had robbed me of my treasured wife."

"I was still weak, at intervals very ill, even delirious, and when we reached Cape Horn I was not well enough even to go ashore. Therefore I finally decided to return to Europe on board the trading vessel, and then to set out from England for Hawaii to try to obtain tidings of my wife or at least hear if her body had been recovered. When, however, I at last reached England, disastrous news awaited me, for I found myself one of the many fairly opulent men suddenly reduced to penury by the failure of Overend and Gurney on the eleventh of May, in the year sixty-six."

"You were one of Black Friday's victims?"

"I was, Mr. Drake. Information to that effect—to the effect that I was cleaned to the very bone, so that the sale of all my property would not nearly enable me to meet the demands even of my ordinary creditors—was the first news I received on reaching England and 'home.' Soon afterwards I changed my name and voluntarily sank into obscurity, for my relations thought me dead, and I had no friends, and I did not wish for acquaintances. Henceforward, I told myself, my aim in life must be the acquisition of a sum of money sufficient to pay for my transport, by hook or by crook, out to Hawaii. I have gained my end at last—but I have been a long time doing it, eh? Twenty years is a long time to spend in amassing such a sum, eh?" He gave a hollow, joyless chuckle. "But then I had to live meanwhile," he added, "I had to live, you see—my life was so very precious!"

II.

Many persons would not have spoken again to such a creature, but what right had I to censure him for his despicable deed? Might not



"I turned upon my wife, and wrested from her the cork jacket."

I, similarly placed, have acted in a similar manner? Moreover, this man had made me his confidant. For the first time in twenty years he had poured the story of his cowardice into the ear of a fellow creature. Truly, I reflected, I should be mean indeed if I took advantage of knowledge so obtained; and then and there I determined to befriend him.

We stopped in Honolulu for a week, and soon afterwards we reached Hilo in Hawaii, whence we immediately set out for the crater called Kilauea, *via* Olaa Village. In Hilo our interpreter had made inquiries of the inhabitants concerning the wreck of the *Numismada*, but "many wrecks occur off the south coast," was all they had been able to tell him, with the exception of one old man, who had pointed out to him that for many years past the bodies of persons drowned at sea had been buried in the valley

lying immediately under the escarpment of Kilauea itself. "Many of the mounds even have stones upon them," he had added, "and some of the names thereon roughly hewn are said to be those of the dead, or of vessels. But most of the graves are covered with lava," he had continued, "for every few years the gigantic crater becomes almost extinct; then, after an interval of eight or nine months' quiet, it suddenly springs again into activity, whereupon the lava overflows its brink. You should be careful not to go into the valley now," the civil native had ended, "for Kilauea has been extinct nearly ten months, and must burst into life again very soon."



I scanned the country with my powerful binocle.

Bearing in mind this warning, I succeeded in dissuading Henderson for nearly a week from going to visit the graves, for I could see that the brink of the crater almost overhung the valley at the very part where many of the mounds could easily be discerned from the summit of the opposite hill, with the aid of a binocle. All day, too, and all night long the ominous rumbling of the mighty crater could clearly be heard in the tiny village called Olaa, where we were now stopping, and day by day it seemed to grow louder and more threatening. On the last night of the week, however, Henderson's patience became exhausted.

"To-morrow," he said, "is the nineteenth anniversary of the wreck. I must go into the valley to-morrow."

In vain I tried to dissuade him, and eventually, inconsistent as my decision may seem now, I resolved to accompany him. As he said, the eruption was already some two months overdue. It might continue threatening for another month or more.

I shall not forget that Sunday so long as I live. We had been sauntering among the numerous little mounds, examining the headstones where there were any, and deciphering the inscriptions thereon, almost since dawn, so we now scrambled to the summit of a steep hill where, we told each other, we might as well rest for an hour or so. It was past noon. The atmosphere was hotter, more sultry, and more oppressive than it had been since we landed, and overhead the sun shone with intense brilliancy in a sky blue and fleckless, causing the rocks and boulders strewn around us—the result, no doubt, of some mighty seismic disturbance in a bygone age—to scintillate in a manner dazzling to our tired eyes.

Away in the distance, at our back, the shining, passive ocean stretched for miles upon miles to a sky-line blurred by the finest of mist, while immediately facing us there rose up abruptly the rugged, barren escarpment which formed, as it were, the outer rampart of the boiling crater. No breath of wind stirred the air. No sound but at intervals a distant rumbling, as of thunder muffled in some subterranean cavern, broke the perfect stillness.

I must have dozed for nearly two hours, for, when I awoke, still in the shade of a friendly boulder, and sat up with a start, the sun had perceptibly changed its position. Also, I was alone. Feeling stiff and uncomfortable, I scrambled to the summit of the boulder itself and peered around me. Henderson had vanished.

It was while thus engaged that I noticed a moving mass in the valley below me. For several moments it puzzled me. Then, of a sudden, the truth flashed upon me, and, as it did so, I unconsciously became aware that the crater no longer rumbled. Indeed, it was almost silent. I levelled my glasses, and then I saw what was happening, for, from a broad crevasse between two abrupt mountain slopes upon the opposite side of the valley and a mile or more to the right of me, a dark-brown, sluggish, turgid stream, in appearance exactly resembling a gigantic flow of treacle issuing from some mammoth, hidden jar, was rolling down into the valley.

At once I knew that the crater, or lake of molten lava, in returning to activity, had overflowed its rocky rampart at some point invisible from where I stood. The turbid stream, when first I focussed it, was already fully half a mile in length, and must have been well over a hundred yards in breadth; and, though it seemed to be travelling slowly, I quickly perceived that in reality it was moving very much faster than any man could walk. Also, as it rolled steadily down the sloping valley, approaching me, though, of course, far below me, I could distinctly see the molten lava first surrounding and then covering every obstacle it came upon, not excepting boulders several feet in height.

With a feeling of satisfaction at my security, I stood calmly contemplating it. So marvellous an effort of Nature I had, naturally, never beheld before, at least, on such a vast scale, and probably I should never witness such a sight again. How I longed for my camera during the minutes I stood there! Presently I observed a great swelling, or wave, extending right across the flow itself and passing rapidly down it, then another, and another, and as these waves raced downward, chasing one another, as it seemed, they reminded me grotesquely, yet very vividly, of the convexities which glide down the lithe body of a great reptilian occupied in swallowing food. Soon the waves, one after another, outpaced the flow itself, and, reaching its terminus with a sort of jerk, considerably increased the volume as well as the speed of the gigantic stream of lava.

Interested and fascinated I watched it all in silence, thankful, indeed, that I was not peacefully sleeping in the bed of the valley, as I might, easily enough, have been doing, for it was by mere chance that Henderson and I had decided to mount the hill before resting. And then the thought recurred to me again, What in the world had become of Henderson?

Absorbed in contemplating the phenomenon in the valley, I had almost forgotten that Henderson existed; now I glanced again in all directions, anxiously scanning the entire stretch of country with my powerful binocle, but no sign of him could I see.

I glanced at my watch. It was three o'clock. Then, as I returned the watch to my pocket, I saw someone moving in the bed of the valley at a point not six hundred yards from me. Again I levelled my glass. A woman—a woman of middle age, she seemed to be; but what she was doing I could not make out. Apparently she was examining the graves, as we had been examining them all the morning. Then, a moment later, I realised her peril, for she was right in the track of the quickly-approaching flow, yet, at the spot where she stood, groping about, the deadly stream must be hidden from her view.

My first impulse, upon my realising her great danger, was to shout; my next to rush down to warn her. But at once I recognised the futility of either cause. For supposing even that my voice were to carry so far, she would not understand what meaning I wished to convey; while as for my reaching her before the stream reached the spot where she stood, why, the bare idea of my attempting to do so was absurd. Every yard, indeed, of the ground between us was strewn with great stones which would prevent my traversing it sufficiently quickly.

Almost as I became aware of my inability to help her I saw a figure, a figure which I immediately knew to be Henderson's, rise apparently out of the ground, not two hundred yards away from the woman. Instantly I knew that he had seen the glowing lava, that he saw the woman likewise and had realised the imminent danger which threatened her, for at once he started off towards the valley, jumping recklessly over many of the rocks and obstructions as they came in his way, scrambling and tumbling over others.

Fascinated still, though terribly anxious for my friend's safety, and for the woman's, I watched him, and I watched the woman still all unconscious of her peril, and I

watched also the dark flow of molten lava rolling steadily down towards them, approaching them faster and faster as wave after wave came pouring forth from the crevasse in the mountain to my right, and then swelled its way into the valley and down the entire length of the glowing stream.

Ah—now the woman saw it! Watching her through my glass, I noticed her sudden start; then, that instead of turning to run, she stood as though petrified, her terrified gaze riveted upon the rapidly approaching flow, which, now within three hundred yards of her, was still silently encircling, engulfing, destroying all obstacles in its course. Apparently a shout from Henderson—though naturally I could not hear it at that distance—at last startled her out of her reverie, for I saw her turn her head in his direction with a jerk, and then, as he continued to shout and gesticulate frantically as he leapt and ran over the rocks and along the valley towards her, she set off to meet him, presumably as quickly as she could travel, though certainly, from where I stood, she appeared to be crawling at a snail's pace, considering that her life itself was at stake.

And now the dark stream, well over two hundred yards in breadth and some three or four feet in depth was within eighty yards of the woman, and as it continued to glide down the valley, which at that point sloped



I noticed her sudden start.

considerably, I could see the liquid lava filling up fissures, covering rocks, sweeping round the base of great bare boulders, like the tidal wave of some inferno. And still the woman crept onward towards the rising ground—I use the word "crept" advisedly, though no doubt she was doing her best.

But would she reach that rising ground. No; a thousand times, no! And as I exclaimed these words aloud a thought similar to mine must have entered her frenzied brain, for she sprang suddenly to one side and for several seconds was hidden from my sight. Then she reappeared upon a broad table-rock up the back of which she had evidently clambered. I breathed again. There, at least, she would be safe for a few minutes, out of danger until the lava had surged round the base of the table-rock and gradually risen.

Then, as all these thoughts came crowding through my brain, I witnessed a scene that I shall never forget, a scene which fairly staggered me; for Henderson was running voluntarily into the very jaws of a horrible death—Henderson the contemptible—Henderson the coward—Paul Henderson the fiend, who, twenty years previously, had so cruelly drowned his wife at sea! Right across the track of the seething flow, now close to the table-rock, he sped like a man possessed, and precisely as he vanished behind it, as the woman had done before him, the molten lava struck its base, shot out into great streams, one on either side of it, streams which quickly reunited as the bulk of the flow swept down upon the solid obstacle, thus completely surrounding it. Could Henderson by any possibility have avoided contact with that scorching torrent? by any possibility have been saved?

With brimming eyes I watched through my binocle the summit of that table-rock, upon which I could still clearly discern the unfortunate woman huddled up, awaiting her doom, and already probably unconscious. I must have watched it for some thirty seconds only, though they seemed to me like minutes, when I suddenly saw Henderson, too, hoist himself from behind it on to the surface, and then run over to the woman.

In a moment he had her in his arms, and through my glass, which clearly revealed every movement of their bodies, every contortion, almost of his features, I saw a kind of fiendish joy light up his face, an expression unlike any I had ever seen there before, as, exerting all his strength, he lifted the apparently lifeless form on to his shoulder. By now the molten stream had reached a level half way up the rock, and the rock itself resembled an island cut off from the nearest shore by a dark brown stream fully forty feet in breadth. Soon the stream would rise to the summit of the broad rock and flow over it, and then—but at that moment I saw Henderson set his teeth, and, without a moment's hesitation, slide with his burden down a few feet of slippery rock, and then step boldly on to the glowing stream!

The sight chilled me to the bone, but I had no time for freaks of fancy. As his boot touched the surface a coil of blue smoke rose into the air, then another as he stepped forward; a third, and then a fourth, and then two more as step by step he trod boldly over the scintillating mass. Even

his hands and face were being severely scorched, but still he bravely struggled onward, tightly clenching his burden with the grim energy which I knew meant now that not even death would wrest it from him.

Then, of a sudden, a shudder convulsed his frame, and he sank to one knee, but, quickly recovering himself, he staggered forward, though now it was evident that his boots were burnt to cinders, that he trod with bare feet upon the glowing lava. And this was the coward! This the criminal! An immense revulsion of feeling occurred within me now as I watched him, until the expression upon his face so upset me that I could bear the sight no longer. Mechanically I let the glass drop to my feet, but I could still see his figure—his figure and that of his burden outlined against the stream.

Three more steps would save him now—two more—ah! he had sunk to his knee again—one more—only one more step and he would stand upon the cool and solid land—and as I watched him struggling to take it I groaned aloud in mental anguish, recognising my impotence, my inability to help him. And then a great cry rose unbidden from my parched throat, a cry of joy, almost of ecstasy, for he had passed that cursed stream, passed from it and fallen fainting but in safety and with his burden several yards from the rocky margin beyond which the molten river still pursued, unheeding, the even tenour of its way.

He has never recovered the use of his feet, poor fellow, and to this day he shuffles along upon crutches. But that gallant act cancelled at once and for ever the cowardly deed which had marked his early life, and it recovered for him that which he now treasures far more than either limbs or life, his long-lost wife, the woman whom he had, by sheer determination and courage, rescued from a terrible death.

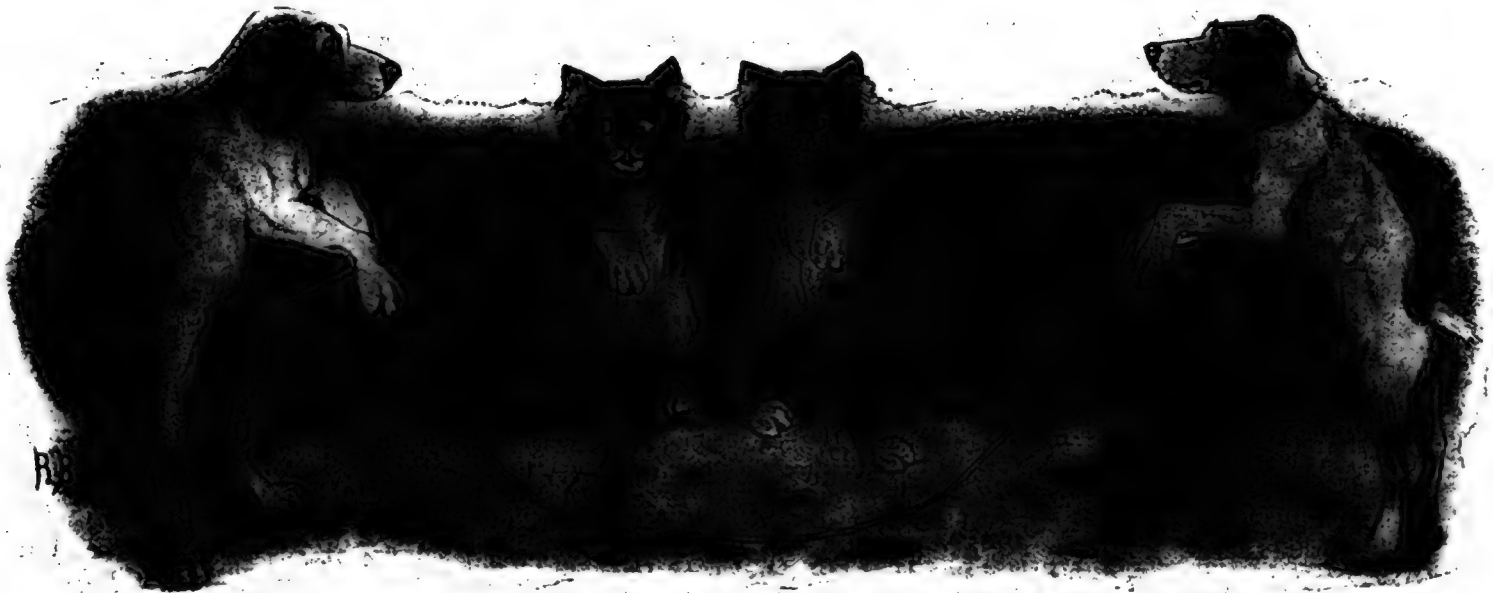
Immediately after the wreck of the *Numismada*, twenty years previously, his wife had, it seems, been washed ashore, but she was not dead, nor even unconscious. A sympathetic English family at that time living near Keauhou had then and there taken her in and succoured her, and when they heard that her husband had been lost in the wreck, and that she, therefore, no longer wished to return to Europe, they asked her if she would live with them, an offer which she gladly accepted. Not until two years after that, and then only by chance, did she hear of the financial ruin that would have come upon

her husband had he survived, and when she heard of it she felt glad he had, so she supposed, been spared the blow. On every anniversary day of the disaster she had gone to Kilauea in order to visit the graves of the victims of the *Numismada*, feeling convinced that one of the bodies lying there must be that of her husband. And it was on the nineteenth anniversary day of that memorable calamity that, within a few miles of the very scene of the wreck, Henderson had saved her life, saved it by sheer gallantry.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Henderson still live in the Hawaiian Isles, but I am not at liberty to disclose their true names, nor yet the name of the island, on which they have now erected a comfortable bungalow.



I saw Henderson slide with his burden down a few feet of slippery rock.



THE WINNING OF THE VICAR

By ULYSSES ROGERS.

THE case of the Rev. Peter Featherhaugh had become serious.

A comfortable living, a picturesque and well-furnished vicarage, a warm-hearted and admiring congregation, are excellent accessories to clerical well-being in this life, and all these the Rev. Pete possessed. But the cause of his trouble consisted in the winning smiles and delicate attentions of a couple of his parishioners, Connie and Minnie Vincent, and it was upon the subject of these young ladies that the Vicar often held a heart-searching with himself.

The girls acted as opposite magnetic poles upon his sensitive nature. It was true that he had a great admiration for the sweet womanly virtues and graces of the gentle Minnie, a ministering angel in the parish, and had often wondered how it had been possible to exist in Wivercombe eighteen months without proposing to her. In fact he would have done so long ago had it not been for the disturbing presence of her sister Connie, a merry, roguish, happy-go-lucky tomboy, skilled in all out-door pastimes in which it was possible for a girl to join, and, freely though unwittingly, using her accomplishments to the wrecking of masculine hearts right and left.

It was only by the slender thread with which Minnie had bound it that the Vicar's was prevented from going in the general train.

The Rev. Pete saw special reasons why he should propose to Minnie, but there were also special reasons why he would have liked to propose to Connie.

It was at the time of the Christmas decorations that the Vicar first began to be troubled in mind over the matter. Both sisters came to help, but whereas Connie occupied herself in climbing the ladders, gossiping with the organist and worrying the verger, Minnie patiently worked at the pulpit, and produced such an excellent elaboration of decorative work that the Vicar went into ecstasies.

"I do not think I ever saw any pulpit embellishment half so beautiful," he said. "Really, Miss Vincent, your artistic skill outdoes even your modesty."

The girl was blushing furiously, with pride and confusion, her embarrassment not being lessened by the fact that her sister was mischievously laughing at her over the Vicar's shoulder.

But an hour afterwards Connie scored.

The cry was raised that the supply of evergreens was giving out. Holly was scarce that Christmas, and the decorative offerings had been small. The Vicar and his helpers were in a quandary, and a council of state gravely discussed the situation in the middle of the church. Their deliberations were interrupted by a voice, apparently from the rafters:

"Hi, there! What's the matter now?"

It was Connie's voice, and it sounded extremely irreverent to the Vicar's ear. Looking up, the decoration committee could just discover a laughing face and a tangle of curls in a window niche at the highest point of the belfry tower.

"More evergreens," she remarked, when the difficulty had been explained to her. "Oh, don't bother about that. I know where to get plenty of stuff. You just go on with what you have, and I'll be back with as much as you want in an hour and a-half."

And she was, much to the astonishment of the Vicar and his helpers. The Rev. Pete was putting the finishing touches to one of the windows, when he saw a diminutive but sturdy donkey labouring along with a gigantic cart load of holly and evergreen. Perched upon the splashboard, market-woman fashion, was Connie.

"I thought I could find some," she said, as she threw the reins over the donkey's back, and triumphantly leapt to the ground.



Perched upon the splash board, market-woman fashion was Connie

"But where?" was the chorus of inquiry.

"Oh, at the woodman's in the Ninham woods. I knew he had a good store, for I discovered it the other day when I was out with Cousin Jack rattle. So I just started for it, and have bought the old chap up. But what do you think of my turnout? Good style, isn't it? The only steed and conveyance I could hire in the village, you know."

Such resource and such promptitude of action quite impressed the Vicar. He was loud in his commendation, and he afterwards found himself wondering whether Connie, after all, would not make a very good wife for a clergyman.

Connie had played well, and the result of the decoration tactics left her in a position to call "check" to her sister's advance upon the Vicar's susceptible heart.

It was in the early spring that the Rev. Pete went out boating, a very foolish thing, for he knew little about rowing, and absolutely nothing about the tides and currents that play havoc with all novices who venture afloat on Wivercombe Sound. But even Vicars do foolish things sometimes, and he was blissfully enjoying himself in a tub of a boat, when without any warning, a gale swept down upon the Sound, and in five minutes he found himself utterly unable to manage his little craft. In another five minutes he was drifting towards a dangerous ledge of rocks, and in five more he found himself in a boiling race of waters, clinging desperately to the bottom of his up-turned boat.

It is highly probable that the earthly record of the Vicar of Wivercombe would have concluded here, had not a boat come to his rescue just in the nick of time. It was manned by but one rower, and that a girl, Connie Vincent. From the cliffs she had been anxiously watching her pastor's movements ever since he ventured out, and the moment he had got into difficulties she had launched her own light skiff, and started for him. In the end the plucky girl, at great risk to herself, brought the minister ashore, more dead than alive, and saw him safely lodged in a fisherman's cottage until he should regain convalescence.

That night the Vicar of Wivercombe dwelt long and earnestly, in silent meditation, upon his wonderful escape and upon the bravery of the girl who had so timely rescued him.

Connie had scored again. As soon as he was well, the Vicar decided, he would place himself and the vicarage at her life-long disposal.

But Minnie Vincent had to be reckoned with. The next morning she was at the cottage with a basket of delicacies, and when the doctor intimated that his patient could not be removed for a fortnight at least, and would require tender nursing, she volunteered for the position, and was accepted right away.

Before he returned to the vicarage the Vicar had completely lost his heart to his nurse. "Connie is excellent in a great emergency," he said to himself, "but where is there a girl the equal of her sister in tending the sick and sweetly ministering to the suffering?" The Vicar was not the first man who has seen the angelic in his nurse. The boating incident, therefore, finally resulted in Minnie's favour, worthily bold though the stroke of her sister had been.

The game, however, was not yet played out.

Minnie clinched the impression produced on the Vicar's mind and heart, by sending him a comfortable dressing-gown, embroidered and initialled by her own hand, but Connie came up level a week later. The convalescent

minister had been driven round to the Vincents', and, as he was being shown over the place, inadvertently, and with consummate ignorance of the subject, expressed his admiration of a litter of bull-pups which the erratic Connie had just purchased.

Vicar Featherhaugh nearly went into a fit the next morning when Jack



In the end she brought the minister ashore.

Maunder, the cousin of the Vincents', opened the vicarage gate, and led in a ferocious-looking bull-bitch.

"Connie sent her," he said to the Vicar, as that worthy, anxious not to have too close an interview with the dog, which had taken possession of the mat and was exhibiting a magnificent row of incisors, viewed the kindly gift through the half-open drawing-room door. "It's the mother of the litter, and a rare good breed, I can assure you."

"Yes, it seems so, but—"

"Oh! that's all right. Connie was so glad to know you were so fond of dogs. She would have sent one of the pups, only the mother is so much more valuable. I had a rare trouble to make a bargain with the owner, but—aren't you coming out to have a look at her?"

"Ah!—no, thank you, not just now—ah—the fact is, I mustn't come out. I've a slight—ah—shall I ring for the servant to take it below? It's awfully good of Miss Connie. Please thank her so much. And so good of you, too, to bring it. I hope you had no trouble on the way. I'm so much obliged; don't you know. Yes, I'm sure it will be a charming household pet."

When "Cousin Jack" had gone, and the Vicar had made quite certain that the bull-dog was securely chained to the cellar wall, with a couple of hundredweight bags of coal placed against the door to prevent any possibility of escape, he sat down and calmly thought out his position.

"Yes," he said to himself. "It was very kind of her, very kind, to think of me in that way, though I hate dogs—bull-dogs in particular. But then she did not know that. It is the motive one should look at. There's a large-hearted generosity about that girl. It's a beautiful trait, and—"

He broke off abruptly, for another idea had suddenly struck him.

"What am I to do with the dog without her?" he asked himself. "There's nobody here can manage the brute. If I marry Minnie—but no, she is all very well at nursing, and things like that, but ruling bull-dogs, no, there's no woman like her sister for that. That settles it. Connie must become mistress of this home—I'll ask her at the fishing party to-morrow."

It was Minnie in check now.

That fishing party! Will any of its members ever forget it? It was a day of surprises—of losses—of catches.

Connie, in contra-distinction to her sister, angled like a true fisherwoman, and landed trout after trout. The parson was full of admiration, and admitted inwardly that he would have no objection to be landed himself by so fair and fascinating an angler. Connie felt sure of it, too, and meant to land him, if possible, before the day was out.

The afternoon wore on. Cousin Jack, the fourth member of the party, was doing well, and so absorbed was he in his sport, that he wandered half a mile or more up stream away from the rest.

Connie and the parson seemed so engrossed in each other's conversation that Minnie, who, like the Rev. Pete, was catching very little, allowed herself to drop gradually down-stream until quite a couple of hundred yards intervened, and she was lost in the thick undergrowth of the banks.

The vicar watched his companion carefully.

"How lucky you are," he said, "I think it must be in the way you cast your line. I wish you would show me exactly how you do it."

"No, it's hardly the way you throw," replied she, laughing, "although that has something to do with it, of course. But it's the way you dangle. The fly must be played properly. Look! like that. There! did you see that fish? He jumped and missed. All the better, perhaps. Fish are like human beings, you know; if they miss once, they have another and a harder try. Look! Ah! Caught! What did I tell you? I knew that exasperating fly, dancing about overhead, would lead him to make another jump for it. Why did he jump, I wonder? Why couldn't he rest content among the stones in the stream?"

The Vicar framed a very pretty answer. His time had come; he knew it, and he was equal to it.

"Because," he said, "because—"

But whatever it was the Vicar was going to say, remained unsaid, for at that moment his speech was interrupted by a loud scream from down-stream.

"It's Minnie," said Connie. "What does it mean? Whatever can have happened?"

Together they hurried back. Minnie they discovered on the ground, helpless. She had slipped over a boulder of rock, and was afraid she had sprained her ankle.

What was to be done? The three thought it out, and then decided upon the only feasible course of action. The Rev. Pete was to carry Minnie as well as he could to the little hotel, a mile farther down the river, whilst Connie was to proceed up-stream, find Jack, and bring him, with the tackle, also to the hotel.

The fishing excursion appeared to have come to an ignominious conclusion, Connie gravely reflected as she wended her way in search of Jack. She would have liked so much to know what the Rev. Pete was going to say. That a crisis had pended her feminine instinct told her. It was so annoying of Minnie to sprain her ankle at that particular moment. And was the sprain so very bad after all?

The Rev. Pete, strange to say, wondered the same, though he said nothing. Instead, he lifted the helpless Minnie in his arms, and set out bravely for the hotel. Then suddenly both became conscious of the fact, that pretty Minnie Vincent was in the arms of the Rev. Peter Featherhaugh, Vicar of Wivercombe, with her arm around his neck, and both blushed. Both also, very wisely said nothing.

But both were busy thinking, nevertheless, and perhaps it will not be considered unnatural that the Vicar eventually arrived at the conclusion that after all, the only woman in the world who could fill the vacant position at the vicarage was the one in his arms, and when they sat down to rest half-way to the hotel, he summed up his courage, and told her so.

Her answer may be surmised from the fact that they were still seated in the same spot when, an hour later, the two other fishers appeared, leisurely strolling along the path. Jack was laden with the rods and creels, and it seemed superfluous labour to have to support on his arm his strong and healthy cousin. But he was doing it, and seemed unaccountably pleased.

Connie took in the state of affairs between her sister and the Vicar at a glance. She had anticipated it; though, half-an-hour before, when Jack Maunder had asked her to be his wife, whilst giving him every possible hope, she had begged him to allow her until the morrow to fully weigh the matter.

The sight of the other lovers, however, settled it. She hesitated no longer. The main thing now was to be first with the announcement.

"Jack," she whispered, as they came up. "I think you may as well introduce me at once, and get it over."

Which Jack instantly did, with great and exceeding joy.



"I am afraid I am a terrible weight," she said.

"Put money in thy purse."

—Shakespeare.



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By MAYNE LINDSAY.

THERE was not much lamentation when Zafar Khan was deposed from the throne of Yaghistan. He had been born with the Eastern taste for intrigue, and he had cultivated it for many years; twisting the tail of the British lion by the hundred and one means that lay within his reach as ruler of a buffer state. He winked at his tribesmen's forays, and bullied the timid merchants from Kashmir and the South, and coquetted airily with the big, fair men who came to the East by an overland route, and who looked covetously across his tableland to where men pointed out the road to Hindostan. But then it happened that one day a little British army wound its way up the self-same road, and left a bloody track in every pass till it bivouacked in Zafar Khan's capital. After which, came a week of mad, terrors lest vengeance should fall in Oriental fashion, and then a pleasant reassurance as an escort of little Gurkhas led the Khan out of his own borders to a southern exile. A judicious cousin reigned in his stead; and Zafar Khan found allotted to him a residence in Phulgarh, a munificent allowance, and a political agent of the first water to harass at his leisure. The Yaghistan expedition went down to the debit side of the year's accounts, and the ex-Khan relapsed into obscurity, with leisure to practise an assortment of politically unimportant vices.

Phulgarh lay smiling in its bower of feathery bamboos and flickering *siam* trees when Mrs. Wimberley came back from Simla. Her husband had been transferred to the district as collector at the beginning of the cold weather, shortly before her arrival. He welcomed her back as a simple-minded man, to whom marriage had not been allowed to be a disillusion, should greet the wife of his bosom, and sang the praises of Phulgarh enthusiastically to her in all good faith. Mrs. Wimberley, who was born a schemer, and knew as much about his appointment as could be expected from a pretty woman whose favourite amusement was playing with the machinery of Departments, listened gravely. She was stacking her flower vases with the wonderful Phulgarh roses, that have a name throughout the length and breadth of India.

"Yes, it is a splendid station," Wimberley said, ending a long account of the district's charms. "Would you like a big Christmas camp, Nell? It is the usual thing here, and you could invite as many people as I could provide with tents."

"Who would there be from the district?" said Mrs. Wimberley. She stepped back to see the effect of an arrangement, and Wimberley noted the slender, graceful figure, and the poise of the beautiful little head.

"There would be Zafar Khan's party," he said. "That would mean Charpentier, of course."

Mrs. Wimberley put a glowing rose into her bosom. She looked up as she fastened it, and her eyes, bright and exquisite as a bird's, were fixed upon her husband.

"Ah, Zafar Khan!" she said. "Let me see now. Who is he?"

"The serpent in this earthly Paradise," said Wimberley drily. "An exiled prince, my dear, to whom Charpentier is attached with a string, and for whose safe custody he is responsible. There was a time when Zafar Khan was suspected of a desire to get back to his own country and stir up a revolution—they say the Russians would give much for that to happen—but he has been always well behaved to the outside view, and I don't ~~think~~ there is trouble to be feared from him. He is a fat and unpleasant person with a bad record." Then his thoughts reverted to the Christmas camp. "I wish I knew a few good shots to ask."

"I knew a delightful globe-trotting person in Simla," said Mrs. Wimberley, "who would very much like a big shoot before he goes back to Europe. He is an excellent shot, and a most interesting man. His name is—er—Von Scharfenberg, and his manners are irreproachable."

"A German?" said Wimberley, with Anglo-Saxon prejudice.

"A German." Mrs. Wimberley bent over a big brass bowl, and her face was hidden by the crimson roses she had heaped within it. "Not sauer-krauty, though. You might ask him."

"We will see," said Wimberley, and his wife knew the idea had found favour. She followed up her advantage, and Christmas Eve found her duly installed in camp with a chosen party of guests, among whom was counted her German friend.

There was a bright log fire burning in the drawing-room tent, and a little circle of people lounged about it, for the evening air was nipping, and a long day's sport had made the company languid. The tent was softly carpeted and lit, bright with flowers and knick-knacks, and the circle was decorously clad in evening dress, so that the scene had an air of luxury that made a pleasant foil to the darkness outside it and the loneliness of the whispering jungle. And, as the connecting link with the outside world, the conversation had taken a personal turn.

"Your German guest is a very neat shot, Wimberley," said somebody. "He ran up a bag in no time. Have you shot with him before?"

"No," said Wimberley, "I don't think he has had any sport in India. But he tells me he has a forest of sorts in Saxony, which accounts for his way with the gun."

Colonel Charpentier stroked his moustache, and frowned at the fire. He was a big, quiet man, with a pre-occupied manner that sometimes deceived people. Only sometimes; for the glance that flashed from his keen, deep-set eyes gave an impression of quick perception that was not to be set aside. He looked up now.

"Did he tell you he was a Saxon?"

"Yes. The Scharfenbergs are a well-known family, I believe."

"I remember the name. But the peculiarity about Herr von Scharfenberg's German is that there is no Saxon softness in it, though there is a faint accent which I should



She was stacking her vases with roses.

be puzzled to localise. He has not been educated in Germany, I imagine."

"I am not enough of a German student to know," said Wimberley. There was a short pause, and the Colonel took up the thread of conversation again.

"I have met Herr von Scharfenberg before," he said thoughtfully. "But where—"

There was a little stir behind the party, and a servant dropped the curtain of the tent after the man of whom they were speaking. He had bent in the low doorway as he came in, and he stood upright again now, bringing his fair, close-cropped head perilously near the ceiling. He was a fine man, broad-shouldered and clean-limbed, and there was something unusual in the quietness with which he had entered. He bowed, and seated himself near Charpentier.

"I was speaking of you the moment you appeared, Herr von Scharfenberg," said the Colonel, turning in his chair. "Can you tell me where we have met before?"

Von Scharfenberg looked at him with the utmost surprise in his blue eyes.

"But no, Colonel. I am not aware of having had the honour of your acquaintance before this week. It is possible, however, that in Dresden—I understand you have been there—?" He broke off with an interrogative smile.

Something in his manner seemed like a covert challenge to Charpentier. He had not mentioned Saxony to the man. But he did not speak for the moment, and Scharfenberg dismissed the subject as if it were not one to be seriously discussed.

"Your charge, the Khan Sahib, was not in good form to-day, Colonel. He missed—bah! how the fellow missed! There was no shoot in him at all."

"He is a good shot, as a rule," said Charpentier. "He seemed nervous to-day. I fancy he is feeling the sudden change from his sedentary life in Phulgarh to this active one. He will be all right to-morrow, probably."

"He will shoot to-morrow, then? That is energy indeed for the fat man. Do you shoot, too, Colonel?"

"Where the Khan Sahib goes, I go," said the Colonel. Then he rose, for Mrs. Wimberley rustled in, late and beautiful. She was a woman who never hurried her toilet, and dinner was announced before she had time to do more than bestow a catholic smile upon the circle at the fire. The idle half-hour was over.

A beat for panther was the order of the following day, and the morning brought every follower out to see the start. The elephants waited in line till the sportsmen had taken their places in the different howdahs, and the sun streaked hotly through the trees upon the clustering tents. There was a clatter of voices in the camp, and servants bustled hither and thither with guns and lunch baskets for the day's work.

Wimberley, as leader of the expedition, took his stand to wait till the rest of the party had started. As the elephants moved slowly out of the bagh, with much ducking of heads among the rice's where branches scraped above the howdahs, Von Scharfenberg bent over and spoke to his mahout, and his elephant gave a sudden spurt that brought it alongside Zafar Khan's for a moment.

"The time is ripe," he said, in English. "Remember! The time is ripe."

Wimberley heard him. He turned the remark over, and there shot through his mind a sudden stabbing mistrust of his foreign guest. What event could call for an understanding between Von Scharfenberg and Zafar Khan, who had never exchanged a word with each other publicly? Then he remembered the previous evening, and a light upon the expression of Charpentier's face flashed back from the present incident. A kindred suspicion had been written in it.

The morning passed with indifferent success as far as the bagging of panther was concerned, and the line wheeled through a strip of thickly-wooded jungle. The lunch hour passed without incident, except that Wimberley, his perception quickened by foreboding, saw Charpentier's eye stray to Von Scharfenberg's face with the pre-occupied air of a man who gropes for the clue to a puzzle and finds it just beyond his reach. Had he been able to watch the two men when they went back to work again, he might have seen the solving of the riddle.

The line crashed through the undergrowth, with a dropping fire from the howdahs as the sport varied, and deer and wildfowl had each their turn in the general slaughter. The sun began to hang low over the trees, and strike obliquely into the sportsmen's eyes as the elephants pressed westward through the jungle.

A peacock bounced suddenly with prodigious fluster from a tree in the line of fire; and Von Scharfenberg raised his gun as it floundered past him. A streak of sunlight caught the barrel and glinted into his face, and the flash, blinding him for an instant, made him turn his head to one side and throw up his hand, in the manner of a man returning a military salute. Colonel Charpentier, who had craned forward to follow the zigzag of the

peacock's flight, caught the gesture, and clapped his hand upon the howdah rail in triumph.

"Petersburg!" he said.

It was hardly possible that Von Scharfenberg could have heard the exclamation, but he saw the sudden movement, and read its meaning in the other's face. He swung round quickly in his place, and emptied his gun into the ground at the feet of Charpentier's elephant.

"Hare!" he cried.

There was a screech of anger from the startled elephant as a bullet grazed it, and it rolled forward with ungainly speed. The next second the branch of a tree before it had raked the top of the howdah, and swept the Colonel back in his seat, stunned and bleeding.

Wimberley called to his man to stop instantly, and dropped, but Von Scharfenberg was down before him. He was loud in self-accusation as the terrified mahout hammered the elephant, quieted at last, on to its knees, and Charpentier was assisted to the ground.

"Fool that I am! I had forgotten that an elephant was not an ambush of stone. That verdamme hare! I will not forgive myself if he has caused an injury."

"I saw no hare, sahib," said Charpentier's shikari, puzzled.

Charpentier was bleeding profusely. The branch had struck him on the side of his head with stunning force, and the outlying twigs had laid his cheek and jaw open from eye to chin. Wimberley improvised a bandage, and watched for signs of returning life. He turned and addressed the company.

"It is only a nasty knock—nothing serious. I will take him straight across the forest to Panipur and get the assistant-surgeon there to patch him up, and in the meanwhile I advise you to make the best of the afternoon and beat slowly back to the camp."

Charpentier opened a blood-stained eye, and looked round him, dazed.

"There appears to have been an accident," he said. "Ah!"—raising his hand to his face—"I am the victim, evidently. The *hathi* bolted—wasn't that it? . . . By all means, gentlemen, go on with your shoot."

He staggered to his feet and walked unsteadily towards the pad-elephant that had been brought forward, mounted it with Wimberley's aid, and held on, supported by his friend's arm, as the huge beast rose from its kneeling position and prepared to start. Then he leaned back exhausted; for the blood was beginning to soak through the rude bandage, and his face was drawn with pain. He set his mouth when the elephant lumbered off, and Wimberley shouted a parting injunction to the party as it stood, uncertain of action, in the flickering, breathless jungle.

"Don't break up the shoot! Go on!" he said. But the last he saw of the men left behind was still a wavering, uncertain group, from which Zafar Khan stood supinely aside, and in which Von Scharfenberg's towering form made the central figure.

The hot nine mile's ride to the native town, where help was to be had, was a long drawn agony to Charpentier, and hardly less so to Wimberley,

whose mind was racked with anxiety for his half-conscious charge. The rough stride of the elephant over uneven ground told upon the wounded man, and it was not until they had reached the city, and his head had been treated by the native doctor in charge, that he seemed to find the power to think over the events of the day.

The Government dispensary was a one-storeyed, whitewashed building that stood back from the main bazaar, and it boasted one room only, scantily furnished with a desk and a couple of office chairs, in which the Englishmen had seated themselves. A ragged reed curtain shut it off from the verandah, and the buzz of life from the city droned through the quiet courtyard.

Charpentier's head had been leaning on his hand, and he had spoken hardly at all during the ride or the subsequent interview with the doctor. He drank down the wineglassful of neat brandy at his elbow, and looked across to Wimberley with an evident effort to pull himself together.

"I do not think my brain has been working till this moment," he said. "We must get back to the camp with all speed, Wimberley. There is danger to be faced."

"What do you mean?" said Wimberley. But he knew in his heart from what direction the danger was to come.

"I mean that I know now what I have suspected since Herr von Scharfenberg came to the camp. The man is a spy—well, that is a hard word, let us call him an agent of his government—and his business is with Zafar Khan."

"But why should the Germans—" began Wimberley, and the Colonel interrupted him.

"Germans! The fellow is a Russian."

There was a pause. Charpentier wiped his face and went on:

"I thought I had seen him before, and the certainty came to me almost at the moment of my accident. It was in Petersburg, twelve years ago, and he was then a junior officer in an infantry regiment. The question



Wimberley paced a man's length across the room.



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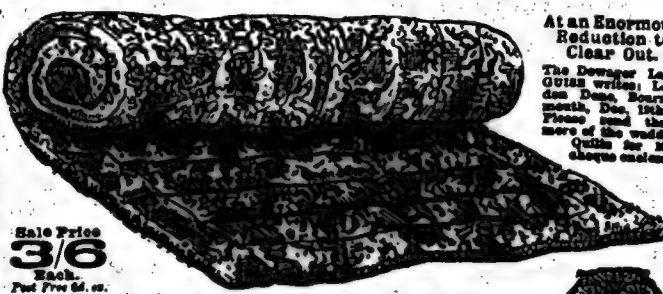
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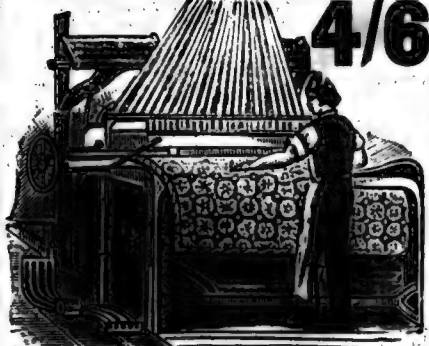
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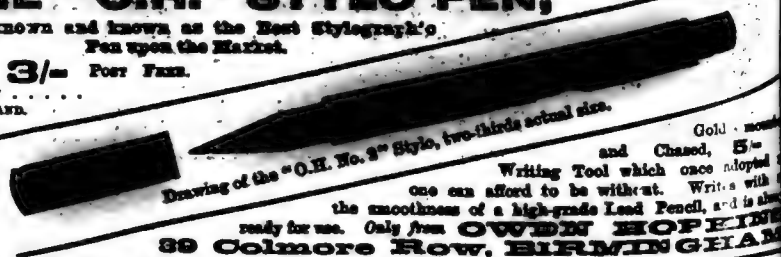
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is, what mischief is he working here? We must get back to camp, Wimberley. I am afraid to think what may be happening."

Wimberley sprang to his feet suddenly, and paced a man's length across the room.

"The time is ripe! The time is ripe!" he said, and his face worked with excitement. "By Heaven, Colonel, you are right! There is danger—imminent danger."

"Steady," said the Colonel, with his quietest manner. "Tell me what you know. And first oblige me by getting the loan of the assistant-surgeon's dog-cart, with the fastest horse he can requisition in Panipur."

Wimberley gave the order, and then he came back to the room and told of what he had heard. Charpentier's fingers tapped on the edge of the chair while he listened, and he paused before he spoke.

"Ha! that makes it more serious than I guessed," he said. "I thought it was merely a question of sedition-mongering, but it looks like something more."

"It looks to me like a bolt," said Wimberley.

"Exactly so. It is of the utmost political importance that things should run smoothly in Yaghistan just now. More than that—it is necessary that not even a rumour of Zafar Khan's holding himself in readiness to fall in with the revolutionary party should reach outside ears. I had an official communication from the capital a month ago, in which I was told that the Khan has shown signs of timidity lately—and you know what *that* means in an Eastern ruler. Somebody has been playing on his fears. Now, if you transport Zafar Khan back to the field of action, or even show that he has slipped through our fingers, you put a big weapon into the hands of the malcontents. For my part, I think the Russians are playing a double game. It is the present Khan they want to work upon, and they are trying to use Zafar Khan as a tool. They know that we could crush any small rebellion, but they are going to stir up a show of one to lever open the gate and get footing with the Khan. Don't you see? Big words—big promises. We do the work, but they get the opening they want. I may be mistaken, and they may mean all they profess to Zafar; but I doubt them, Wimberley—I doubt them. And our Von Scharfenberg thinks he can smuggle his man out and over the border, does he? No, no; we will checkmate him there."

"How?"

"They have not reckoned that five years of idleness with his women and his forbidden liquors have played havoc with a naturally flabby constitution, that is all. I doubt if the Khan will rise to the situation, particularly if it comes to blows or hard riding. And now give me another nip of brandy, Wimberley, and help me into the tumtum. I may be crippled; but we will beat our Russian diplomatist with simpler weapons than he has used, unless fate works against us."

"If it does?" said Wimberley.

Charpentier raised himself from his chair and walked out towards the verandah, beyond which the dog-cart had just been drawn up. As he lifted the reed curtain he turned his bandaged head, and Wimberley saw his eyes glitter with the resolution of a man who braves a grave peril.

"We won't consider the dark side of the question," he said, steadying himself for a second against the frame of the door. "But I know how the Imperial Government would look on me if I failed them; and at least it shall not be said that I hesitated while there was power in my brain and life in my body."

The distance from Panipur to the camp was eleven miles, over a sandy *kacha* road, into which the wheels sank deeply; but Wimberley handled whip and reins with all the skill he possessed, and the little bamboo cart jolted on at breakneck speed as the dying sun dipped low to the hills and vanished, and the bright Indian stars began to hang in the deepening sky. He was full of the danger that menaced the quiet man at his side. If Zafar Khan escaped from his keeping, it would go hardly with Charpentier. He looked back, and he blamed himself for the invitation that had brought about the mischief. He should have inquired—have thought. He could not criticise his wife's action, for how should an unsuspecting woman guess of the tangle that had ensued? No, he blamed himself, and he had still only admiration for his wife in the very ingenuousness of her hospitality. But there was hot anger in his heart against the treacherous guest who had lied to him—and her.

On rattled the cart, and when it drew up at last in the shadow of the bagh, where lights were twinkling, and the hum of voices came cheerfully with the sight of the red beacons of camp fires, Charpentier climbed down stiffly from the cart and walked straight to the Khan's quarter. Wimberley saw his white, set face as an orderly ran forward with a lantern, and knew what the resolute attitude cost him. He strode to the policeman sentry before the tent, and brought his tramp to a sudden halt.

"Is the Khan Sahib within?" he said.

"By your honour's favour, the Khan Sahib has not yet returned from the hunt. The Khan Sahib and the strange sahib took a long round on the way back to avoid the ford, and the other sahibs came through the water. They have been two hours within the camp, and the Khan Sahib has been expected for an hour."

Charpentier turned on his heel and faced Wimberley.

"They have gone to catch the night mail at Ujhani," he said. "Who knows what they mean to do after that? If they get to Amballa before morning, it will be like looking for a needle in a haystack to pick the Khan from any other native in the big city. And, anyhow, the scare will have been raised."

"An hour's start," said Wimberley. Then he threw back his head in triumph. "I have got them, Colonel! The forest track to Raipur will cut them off. I don't know where they may have got their mounts—they

must have left the elephants somewhere—but they will need Derby winners to pass the cross road before nine. Tell the sais to saddle my big horse, orderly."

"Six miles, isn't it?" said the Colonel. "I can do it. The Arab for me, orderly. No, Wimberley—not a word; you needn't stop to pick up the pieces if I fall by the wayside. Bah, there, man! I know. Bring your revolver, please, and load it before you start."

As Wimberley felt for his stirrup leather in the dim light, he saw the Colonel hoist himself painfully into the saddle, and he watched the white blur of the bandages sway above the horse's neck for a second. But remonstrance had been proved useless, and the next minute they were picking their way among the tent ropes and swinging out with a soft thud-thud of eager hoofs on to the forest path. The night scent of the jungle was strong in their nostrils, and the sandy track gleamed faintly through the smudges of scrub and brake and crowding trees. The camp lights dwindled to pin points, and the blackness swallowed up the path as they flung the miles behind them, and galloped on. Charpentier breathed heavily, and once or twice there came an involuntary groan; but he gripped the saddle strongly between his knees, and his Arab kept pace, stride for stride, with the flying steed before him.

A broad road at right angles to the track gaped suddenly, and Wimberley drew rein in the shadow of the trees. The forest faded about an open space, and the low outline of Raipur showed across the road, three furlongs' length beyond it. In the stillness of the evening air the men could hear the yelp of the pariah dogs belonging to the village, and catch the sharp smell of the drifting smoke. Wimberley looked at his watch.

"They must have crossed the ford on the elephants," he said. "If the horses were the other side they cannot have passed, though they might be here soon. How are you, Colonel?"

"Well enough," said the Colonel grimly. "Hark!"

Wimberley listened, and drew his horse back yet deeper into the shadow. There was the faint, dull beat of hoofs upon the dusky road. It came nearer and nearer, and he felt something clutch his throat as he saw Charpentier turn his bandaged head slowly, and throw the reins upon his horse's neck.

A dark patch blurred the lighter shade of the narrowing road, and split into two as it grew more visible. The drum of the hoofs seemed to have sounded in his ears for an eternity, and it was with a fierce satisfaction that surprised himself that Wimberley saw the approaching figures of Von Scharfenberg and the Khan loom out of the dusk. Then a voice sounded in his ears, and Charpentier spurred his horse, with one bound, into the middle of the road.

"Halt!" he said.

Zafar Khan reined his horse back almost on to his haunches. Von Scharfenberg stood up in the stirrups, raised the butt end of a pistol to strike, and charged headlong at his enemy.

"Ride on," he shouted to the Khan, and brought his pistol down with a swinging side-blow.

Charpentier swerved, and the stroke fell upon his horse's withers. The Arab plunged and the Colonel flung himself upon the Russian, gripping the horse with his knees and throwing his arms about the other man in an effort to drag him from his saddle. There was something horribly silent about the encounter, and the two men only gasped as they writhed and struggled over the road.

Wimberley's course was clear. He crossed to where the Khan had backed—a bunched-up mass that made no effort to dash for freedom—and he laid his hand upon his bridle rein, and brought his revolver into view.

"You are my prisoner, Khan Sahib," he said.

The Khan shook and stared, with fear-stricken eyes, from his captor to the conflict before him. The power of action seemed to have left him, and he had collapsed at the first brush with danger into a gross, jelly-like substance that quivered, and gurgled uncouth Yaghistan mouthfuls. Twice came Von Scharfenberg's hoarse order to ride on, and twice the Khan heard and shook the more. His broad, fleshy face had turned livid with fear. Wimberley found unmeasured disgust surge over him every time he looked at the man.

The conflict in the road was a fight of giants, but it was short. The advantage in physical strength seemed all to the Russian, unwounded and huge; but Charpentier had flung himself upon him so suddenly that he had caught his arms to his sides, and he clung to him like a leech, twisting and panting as the horses scuffled beneath them. Von Scharfenberg put out all his strength to wrench himself free, but the grip held, though the Colonel's face was grey with pain, and the sweat stood upon it in great beads. The passive Englishman caught his breath as he watched. Once, when Von Scharfenberg had wrested his arm free to the wrist, he thought Charpentier was failing, and lifted his revolver to end the fight, and then the British sporting instinct kept him back, and he held his hand. A second later the Colonel dropped the wrist, and caught his adversary once more just above the middle. He dug his heels into the Arab's side, and Von Scharfenberg gave a quick gasp. The next moment he was dragged from the saddle, and fell with a dull thud upon the metalled road, the Colonel above, and his ribs cracking in the deadly clutch that was about him.

Charpentier raised himself, a knee each side of the prostrate body; turned it face dustwards in spite of struggles, and pinned the arms to the ground with his iron fingers.

"Is it enough?" he panted.

"More than enough," came the voice from the dust. "Let be, most excellent Colonel. I think my ribs have gone."

The Colonel unpinioned him, knelt up, and rose to his feet. But before he stood he groped across, and picked up the Russian's pistol from

where it had fallen in the road. He slipped it into his pocket, and handled his own familiarly.

For some moments Von Scharfenberg neither spoke nor moved. Then he lifted himself painfully from the ground by slow stages, stumbled to the side of the road, and collapsed upon a grassy bank. Charpentier followed him, holding on to the mane of the Arab, and breathing thick and fast.

"You have the grip of a black bear," said the Russian. "I congratulate you, Colonel. I am sorry that this should have happened so soon after your late distressing accident, but unfortunately, in spite of your good Tennyson, man is not always master of his fate."



"Is it enough?" he panted.

Good evening, Mr. Wimberley. You have our bone of contention in safe keeping, I see. Upon my honour, sir, if he were my prisoner, I would wring the coward's neck. There is not—how do you say it?—the blood of a mouse in him."

He spoke coolly, but his lips were white, and the look he sent to the unfortunate Khan made that gentleman draw his bulky person a little further into the gloom. Wimberley spoke.

"We might have an explanation now, I think," he said.

The Russian shrugged his shoulders.

"Bah!" he said, "you do not want

that, or you would not be here. The fortune of war has spoiled my little coup, and you and the Colonel have the advantage at present. It is not material for you to know more than you do."

"No, perhaps we know enough," said Charpentier. "You have played for a high stake, Herr von Scharfenberg—or should I say Schumanoff?—and with more than doubtful weapons, and it is as well for you to learn that abuse of hospitality may bring a quick retribution."

"A means to an end—a means to an end," said the Russian, indifferently. "All's fair in love or war, as I think your proverb has it."

"Well, there will be no revolution in Yaghistan this year," said Wimberley. "What are we to do with them, Colonel?"

"The Khan Sahib will return to camp," said Charpentier, "after having lost his way in the jungle. As for Captain Schumanoff, if I give him his right title—the Russian bowed—"it remains to be seen how the Imperial Government will deal with him."

"I do not fancy, somehow, that your Government will care about having me on their hands," said Schumanoff. "They are not anxious to strain international relations, as a rule. And, for private reasons, it would perhaps be better that the incident should be closed here. Come, give me a horse to the doctor and forward my baggage to the railway, and I promise that you shall hear no more of the matter. Word of honour of a Russian! A bargain, now!"

"What, let you off scot free? You are mad."

"If you call scrunched ribs scot free—"the Russian laughed. "But—the private reason. It is not only we three that are concerned."

"What do you mean?"

"You forget the manner of my introduction to the camp. Mrs. Wimberley might remind you."

Wimberley's face darkened, and his hands trembled as he flung himself off his horse and made a step towards the Russian.

"You scoundrel!" he said. "If you dare to insinuate that my wife knew anything—"

"What did I say?" appealed Schumanoff to the Colonel, whose keen eyes had missed not a detail of expression in his face. "I insinuated nothing, I repeat. Ask Mrs. Wimberley."

But the Colonel interposed. He had seen that which told him that the old proverb of the woman in the case was exemplified once more. And he saw, too, the only way to save Wimberley from that bitter knowledge. Who knew why she had done this thing? He called it caprice—the child's

love of dangerous toys—anything, anything rather than disloyalty to the man who loved her. But Wimberley must not suspect; for in suspicion lay the wreck of happiness, and that satisfaction should not be left to the Russian.

"Mr. Wimberley knows that his wife took you in too good faith. Captain Schumanoff, and we as well as you can see that it is not a case in which it would be pleasant for her to be involved. You see that we understand that!"

He fixed his eyes upon the man from behind his bandages. Schumanoff looked up into his face, and for the moment Wimberley stood unconsciously aside in the action of the drama in which the two first actors measured each other. Schumanoff drew a long breath. He had played his last card, and the honours of the trick were with him.

"I see, yes," he said. "It is a side issue, of course; but we have some chivalry in these latter days, hey? We will not have the lady involved."

"She must know nothing about it," said Charpentier.

"Nobody will know anything—word of honour of a Russian, my dear Colonel. Your Government, believe me, will not thank you for making an international affair. I go; there is no more said. And that pig"—with a look of ineffable contempt at Zafar Khan—"will go back to his prison. It is well for him; he has not a man's heart when the fighting comes—he has been out of the world too long. I throw him aside now, gladly, and when we come to play the game again may I have a better tool. . . . Yet he would have served."

"Ah!" said Charpentier, with comprehension. "It was not the straight game for him, then, that you played?"

"Perhaps not. I throw him aside, I say. And now, gentlemen, will you help me to go, as I said? There will be no scandal."

"No, there will be no scandal," said Charpentier. "You shall go, and I take your word that there will be silence."

Schumanoff rose from the roadside and crossed to his horse, which was grazing with trailing bridle beside him.

"Will somebody help me to mount?" he said.

Wimberley went forward and half lifted him into the saddle. He groaned at the effort, and sat with his head upon his chest for a moment. But his face, when he lifted it, was as clear as before.

"The Colonel and I have both had some little scratches to-day," he said. "You are a brave man, Colonel, and I am glad to have met you."

"I am afraid I cannot say the same," said Charpentier. "But some day, perhaps, I shall be better pleased to see you—beyond the border."

"Ah! when the Gate is opened. The time will soon come; you and I will live to see it. We will measure swords to some purpose then, gentlemen; and whether it be in Yaghistan or not, I pray the good God to send me such adversaries as I have met to-day."

He lifted his hand to his forehead in a military salute. The two men stood back, and he swung into the darkness, cool and imperturbable to the last.

Charpentier stood and watched him until the darkness of the forest-bordered road had swallowed him up, and the beat of the hoofs had faded among the noises of the distant village and the rustle of the jungle as it stirred out of its day-long sleep.

"May I be there when you come back!" he said, "There will be hard hitting, and scores to wipe off. But, until then, let us hope you have learnt that there is to be no picking of locks."

"I am sorry we had to let the rascal go," said Wimberley. "But I can see that the Government would not have thanked you. Let us go now, Charpentier. You have done more than ten men's work in this strange day."

The Colonel turned, and in the dim light a great oozing patch, that spread itself slowly over the white, showed upon the bandage, and he swayed backwards and forwards instead of moving to his horse. Wimberley started towards him with an exclamation, and even the shivering Khan found a moment from his own selfish terrors to stare aghast.

"Remember," said the Colonel, with a smile and a last effort at coherent speech. "Mrs. Wimberley must not be told. You must not shock her—nerves, you know." He looked once more into the darkness. "Yes.—We shall meet again—face to face. And—we—shall keep—the Gate."

He flung up his hands with a sudden movement, and dropped senseless into the road.



He flung up his hands with a sudden movement.

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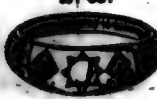
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CRIMINALS

By A. O. TIBBITS.

I.
INSPECTOR JOHN BRYCE was a hard man. His life—his daily contact with criminals of all sorts and conditions had brought out all the stern and bitter side of his character. He had no mercy, and he showed none, and the prisoners who were brought to the Great Melbury Street Police Station did not as a rule expect any. They were a desperate lot, hardened, drink-soddened, brutal, and hopeless. John Bryce looked upon them mostly as "studies." He had long ago ceased to think them human beings. He would examine a drunken man much as one would examine a curious insect in a museum, and I believe if he had had his way he would have shot a thief with as little compunction as he would have shot a poisonous snake. He was apparently heartless. Nevertheless, he had a soft side, and he discovered it one day when he least expected it.

It was a wretched, wet night. The rain dripped, dripped down the spouts, and gurgled in the gutters, and every now and then the wind rushed up and dashed it vehemently against the window panes of the Great Melbury Street Police Station.

John Bryce raked up the coals in the grate, and drew away from the musty books on the desk nearer the fire. A fire was a blessing on a night like this, but John Bryce did not even feel thankful that he was not out in the streets like Policeman XXX, who was probably going past that very minute. He was glad of the fire, but he was glad that it was *his* fire and nobody else's.

As he sat staring into the red hot coals the door of the outer office opened suddenly and let in a strong gust of wind and rain. There was the sound of footsteps crossing the wooden floor, the rustle of a mackintosh, and through his half open door Bryce could see a stiff and burly policeman leading in a crying child.

He got up slowly and yawned, and stretched himself before he went out, and then he pushed the door farther open and stood eyeing the dripping and muddy child with an air of disgust.

"Lost?" he inquired briefly, and the policeman nodded.

"Parents a 'oliday makin', I reckon," he said. The child watched him carefully, and then turned to stare up into the big Inspector's hard face as if she was wondering anxiously what the ogre would say to her. Her baby eyes were very blue—"the kind that get bleared so quickly," Bryce thought—and he snorted contemptuously.

"Well," he said, "you'd better leave her;" and with a shake to his dripping mackintosh and a brief good night the policeman departed.

Bryce looked at the child. She was a very stunted little thing, with red hair, and wonderful eyes and skin. Bryce noted none of those things. He was trying to read the common story of drink, brutality, and neglect in the ragged petticoats and hopeless shoes, and with an awkward movement he pulled open the door of the inner office and gruffly bid her go in.

When she was seated before the fire, stretching out her little toes to the warmth, he caught himself looking at her interestedly. He looked at her red hair and bright blue eyes, and he fancied he detected signs of the criminal in her little upturned nose and childish mouth.

The firelight played on her dimpled chin. John Bryce watched it, and tried to imagine what it would be in years to come, when it had grown coarse and bloated and ugly. For it *would* grow coarse and bloated and ugly. He could see the criminal in the child face already—there was cunning in her glance, deceit in the droop of her eyelids, and her hair was red—that peculiar East End red that Melbury Street knew so well. Just now the child was pretty enough, but John Bryce was not an artist and he did not notice that.

He leant his chin on his hand and wondered what her mother was like.

Drunk, of course: father a beast: none none to speak of—probably a low lodging-house in a foul alley, with a gutter for a playground and thieves for companions. He had seen thousands of such children. He had seen them grow up, too, and would probably see many more. They all came to the same end. They all came to the Great Melbury Street Police Station in time.

He turned away to the ledgers and documents that were strewn his desk, but, somehow, his thoughts would not concentrate. They returned constantly to the child who sat so quietly in front of the fire. She was very quiet—very unlike the usual East End urchins who pried into everything, and felt no sort of shyness when they were ushered into the presence of strangers. She seemed too absorbed in the unaccustomed warmth to notice anything else, and her toes, quite visible through her broken boots, were held out to the grate.

Bryce wondered how she would grow up; he wondered how far the canker had eaten into her nature, and with a sudden wish to test her, he got up, and went to a cupboard. From the cupboard he took a small jam tart, and, deliberately leaving it on his desk, went out into the other office.

He remained there for some time, and when he returned he found that his worst fears were confirmed. The tart still lay on his desk, but in the middle of it was a huge gap, bearing the marks of tiny teeth, and when he looked at the child he saw that her mouth was sticky and red with jam.

"There," he said to himself; "the criminal instinct shows itself even in a child of three; it's in her blood."

"Who touched this cake?" he asked aloud, and the sharpness in his voice made her look up with a vague fear in her eyes.

"It wath me," she replied promptly; "I wath 'ung'y."

The Inspector looked at her in some surprise, for it was out of his reckoning for a "born criminal" to confess so readily, and with an abrupt movement he flung the remainder of the tart into her lap.

"Take it, then," he said, and the child seized it with pitiful eagerness, and began to devour it, heedless of his severe gaze.

He was still watching her when his wife came downstairs into the office. She, too, was a hard-looking woman, but there were lines about her mouth which spoke of disappointments and heart aches.

She stopped abruptly when she saw the child.

"Oh, John," she said, "a baby—lost, I suppose?"

She looked at it for a moment, and then she suddenly went to her husband's side.

"John," she said, in a choked whisper, "do you see the likeness? Look at her face! Our little Alice would have been like that if she had lived—golden hair, and all. Oh, John, if only we had her now."

She went up to the child, kissed her jam-stained mouth, and then disappeared abruptly.

John sat staring at the child. Their little Alice! The words conjured up feelings that had been dead these many years. A child! He had forgotten what it was like to wish for one. For years his heart had been dead. He had been so busy with the evil things of life that he had forgotten the good that remained.

He stared at the child again, and this time he saw something more than an undeveloped criminal in her little thin face, and as he watched her his memory began to creep backwards through the dull years of his life. A softness came over his face. New feelings crept into his heart. He was remembering his little Alice!

"Where is your mother, child?" he asked, presently; and the wail, startled at being questioned, turned suddenly.

"See's at ome," she said shyly.
 "And—and does she love you?" he asked next. The question was an astonishing one, and the Inspector wondered if he blushed as he asked it, but the child apparently did not understand it.

"Er's ill," she said.
 "Ill, is she?" repeated Bryce. "Drunk, I suppose," he added to himself. "Is she often ill?" he said, aloud.
 The child nodded, and Bryce sat thoughtful, while her face grew upon him, and the soft feeling at his heart spread.

He sat staring at the half-starved mite so long that his imagination began to wander away. Her face faded, and his own dead little girl seemed to come back to him. He fancied he could feel her tiny fingers clinging to his big ones, and a strange trembling took possession of him—if only he had a child!

He shook himself suddenly to find that the waif was sitting half asleep over the fire, and, scarcely knowing what he was doing, he got up, and put his hand on her hair.

The curls clung to his fingers; they seemed to fasten on his heart, and when she looked up into his face something seemed to loosen at his throat.

"Come along," he

said abruptly. "Let's see if we can't find some more goodies in the cupboard yonder."

Ten minutes later he had thrown his dignity to the air, and was cutting the tarts into pieces for her to eat.

II.

In the midst of this edifying occupation the outer door burst open and someone walked in, bringing with him the usual accompaniment of mud and water and gusty rain.

"I must go—just for a minute," he said to the child, and an instant later he was confronting a red-headed, bloated individual who inquired hoarsely for a child.

"What child?" asked the Inspector.

"Er's goin' on fer three year," said the man. "An' 'er's got golden kerls an' blue eyes, an' 'ers about this 'igh," measuring with his hands.

A sudden wish came to Bryce—a wish that an hour ago he would have sneered at the thought of. After all, he reflected, how much happier the child would be with him—better in every way if he kept her and trained her and brought her up properly. Thoughts of the streets, the wet, the drunken brute before him sent him plunging head foremost into a crowd of prevarications.

"We've no such child here," he said boldly. "The only one we've had here to-night was wizened and thin, and there were no golden curls about her. She had red hair—thick red hair and freckles."

But at this instant the inner door was pushed quietly open and a little face peered out and put him to confusion.

"Why, there 'er is," shouted the father indignantly. "An' bin there all th' time! Oi should like ter know who you're a-kidding on? Red 'eaded! I like that, I do! 'Ere you," to the child, "come on—a-givin' me a rise like this—come on now, an' don't yew get a-goin' off no more."

He began crossing the room as he spoke, and Bryce stood stupidly watching the child. Then he stooped down and slipped a shilling into her hand.

"Don't tell daddy," he whispered—it never occurred to him that he was teaching the child deceit—and then he watched them leave the station and cross the road in the wind and rain and slush.

Just as they reached the other side, the child dropped her shilling. Like a hawk the man was upon it, and the next minute he was dragging her back to the public house they had just passed.

John Bryce watched them disappear between the swing doors with feelings that he thought had completely died away in him.

"Criminals," he said. "Criminals, both of them. It's in the blood, and she'll grow up like the rest, and some day she'll come back here."

III.

Six months later, for some strange reason which is inexplicable in this world of riddles, he had never succeeded in forgetting the dirty child who had eaten his jam tarts. There is a weakness in all human hearts, and John Bryce's weakness had found him out and penetrated a heart that was apparently impenetrable. He sat in his office, gruffer than ever, but all the

same he was conscious of a longing and a loneliness, that at times made him think that he was growing old.

One night he was out late, and he came back through some low lying slums and alleys, where filthy houses were crowded together—human kennels filled with struggling masses of men and women and helpless children. In the daytime there were children everywhere—children on the doorsteps, children in the gutters, children rolling on the dirty pavements—"undeveloped criminals" he still called them, but to-night he sighed as he passed the places where they were huddled together.

He had turned a corner into a narrow street when he suddenly became aware of an unusual glare in the sky. He watched it for a moment as it grew and spread, and then a fire engine dashed quickly past him. The next minute he had turned and followed it.

When he reached the scene of the fire he found a throng of excited faces staring upwards at the smoke and sparks and angry flames. The light flickered up and down, and cast strange shadows on their faces, and a breathless suspense seemed to hold the crowd.

Apparently the fire was entirely beyond the control of the firemen, for the heavy streams of water that splashed and hissed on the hot bricks did not seem to have the least effect. The fire roared and crackled, and shot up its yellow tongues to the sky as if it was a fiend mocking their helplessness.

The buildings were doomed, but all the inmates were safe in the street below except one, and he had rushed back suddenly without warning, and had disappeared in the midst of the smoke and flame.

It was suicide—simple suicide, said the crowd, and he was a man with a child, too.

Then a sudden suspicion seized them, and there were hurried whispers that no one had seen anything of the child—that no one had seen her that night since her father had gone out to get drunk as usual at the "Three Crowns" round the corner.

Then, argued the crowd, the child was in the building, and that was the reason why the man had gone back in that foolhardy fashion: and they strained forward, staring up at the pitiless fire, calling hoarsely to the man to come back.

Minutes passed, the flames spread and grew, the houses seemed to shake and totter, and then at last, after what seemed an interminable time, a man appeared at a window with a bundle in his arms.

A dozen men ran forward with a ladder. It was reared steadily against the cracking walls, and he crawled out of the window to descend.

John Bryce stood below watching eagerly. He saw the man clutch the child in his arms, he heard him cry out suddenly; and then the fire burst out with renewed vigour, the smoke curled up, the flames licked and writhed about the ladder, and then the child fell suddenly and swiftly into Bryce's arms.

He held her tightly, and shouted hoarsely to the man that the child was safe.

But only God knows if the man heard.

He reeled, slipped, and then fell with a horrible swiftness to the street below.

When they picked him up he was beyond their help, beyond the reach

of their voices, and he lay with his bloated face, blackened by smoke and burnt with fire, turned up to the blue sky above him.

When John Bryce looked down at him he wondered whether the drunken criminal was a hero after all.

When Bryce found that the child's mother was dead, too, he tucked her under his arm and took her home. When he pulled her out of the dirty shawl which enveloped her, her eyes

seemed bigger and bluer than ever, her hair just as red; but he failed to notice the possibilities for evil in her childish face. He kissed her—very foolishly—and then roused his wife, to her great indignation, from her beauty sleep. But when she saw the child she sat up in bed, and held out her arms to her.

"Oh, John," she cried, "it's our little Alice come back again."



The child nodded, and Bryce sat thoughtful.



An instant later he was confronting a red-headed, bloated individual.



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5. D - - - - - Y P - - - - - Y

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WHAT TO DO.—When you have found what you believe are the missing letters, write the words out on a sheet of paper, numbering them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, as above, and send same to us, with a P.O. (not stamps) for 1s. 6d. and stamped addressed envelope for return, and we will forward to you, post free, a collapsible tube of the "Dido" Dentifrice (Foreign Orders, 2s., payable in London). We offer the above prizes to purchasers of our Tooth Paste, in order to make this remarkable proposition known to the public, and we are prepared to expend some thousands of pounds on this method of advertising our Dentifrice. We may say we give you not only full value for your money, but for 1s. 6d. post free, you will receive a tube of the "Dido" Tooth Paste, the largest quantity ever offered at the price.

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DO NOT HESITATE, but send AT ONCE for the "DIDO" DENTIFRICE, and avail yourself of this exceptional opportunity to obtain one of these beautiful Watches, as this offer may not be repeated. Write your name and full address very distinctly, and put the name of this paper at the top of your letter. Keep a note of the number of your Postal Order in case it goes astray. This Competition will close on December 31st, 1898. Prizes will be awarded and results posted a week later. The solution has been sealed, and deposited with Messrs. H. W. Bair & Co., 119 Fleet Street, London, E.C.

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In addition to this, the above £100 Free Cash Prizes will be given away amongst the competitors who can make out the correct names of one or more of the six stone fruits, which the following mixed letters will spell, viz.:

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By JOHN LE BRETON.

"I HAD plenty of money then, and I remember——"

Old Gran'père Ribot chuckled, and rubbed his dry, thin hands against each other as he sat in the chimney-corner where the firelight was yellow and shining upon him, and pierced even into the blackness beyond his chair; and Robert, the old Ribot's middle-aged son, and Madame stole behind the curtain that half-screened him from the room, and waited to hear where he had hidden that money, just as they had listened and waited for many, many years.

Robert and Madame, and the little Marcelle, who was their only child, had to work very hard, for the Ribot farm was so small; and in spite of their unceasing labour, one dry summer would wither all their savings with the parched crops. They could never be sure what the days would bring to them, and Marcelle's young hands were already becoming gnarled with rough work; yet it was true that Étienne said that they were the prettiest hands in the whole world, and Étienne had been abroad, and had lived the life of a sailor for six years, and having seen pretty hands in India, and America, and in a thousand other places, he was a good judge. Almost every evening when he came, Marcelle would murmur like a little cooing dove, all about the ugliness of her plump fingers, so that he should kiss them and say that they were the sweetest the *bon Dieu* had ever made, and the fairest. When he had made his farm yield more—just a little more—and Marcelle came to share it with him, as she had promised to do, those little hands would never work so hard again, he said.

"Ah! if we could but find where the Gran'père has hidden his money, then——" and Marcelle would sigh, and they would all sit round the fire with the old man, and listen, oh! so carefully, to his tales of long ago, hoping keenly that unawares he might let fall the secret he had guarded long and well.

The leaping flames threw a flickering ruddiness on the scored and wrinkled face of the old soldier who still found pleasantness in life. His mind played with the memories of the past, and every story ended with a hushed chuckle, even the bloody ones of war.

The sighs of Robert and Madame were deeper far than those of Marcelle, for they felt that they were growing old and that time had leadened their feet and burdened them very heavily for the latter part of their journey. No magic of young love set the flush and joyous breath of budding roses between them and their great unrelenting mistress, the earth, who exacted so much of them, and gave so little in return. They clung to one another still, but it was for help, for comradeship, not for the mere intoxication of the touch of hands. They were loyal and tender husband and wife, but the earth held them bond-slaves; and all because no one could find out where the Gran'père had hidden that money.

"Tell us of Russia, Gran'père, and how you went to Moscow," said Marcelle, as they sat in the red-floored kitchen, resting after the toil of the day.

"Ah! yes, tell us of Moscow, Gran'père," repeated the others.

The veteran looked proudly at them, and asked for his sword. He wished to feel the familiar hilt in his grasp once more, and to remember that he had been a soldier, and one who served under the great hero of time—the glorious Napoleon. So Marcelle unhooked the scabbard from the wall, and Étienne drew out the strong blade and touched the three notches that marred its smooth sweep, as he always did. Then Gran'père took it into his trembling old hands and kissed the hilt, and fondled it as a child might caress a favourite toy; and he laughed over it and wept over it until they reminded him that they were waiting to hear his story.

With a jerk, he carried the sword to his shoulder, and saluted them with it. Then he placed it between his knees and held it there.

"Ah! the grand army," he said, "it was the grandest army the world ever saw. It was gathered from all parts of Europe, my children. There were Italians and Swiss, and lancers from Poland, and Germans and Irish, and most of them hated us—but they had to march under our flag, for look you, we were the masters of the world!"

"Now tell us what the great Napoleon said to you, Gran'père," cried Marcelle.

The old man stood upright, shaky though his limbs were.

"'Corporal Ribot,' called the grand Napoleon; and everyone heard his voice, it was so sweet and clear, and yet so terrible, 'Corporal Ribot! I pressed my horse forward, and saluted.'

"'Ribot, my old friend,' said he, 'they have told me of your prank. So you fought three Bavarians single-handed because they would not salute every time my name was spoken? *Bon ami*,

thou art a sturdy *moustache*, but remember that every Bavarian killed is a recruit lost to our army. Thou and I are friends of a long time, or it might have gone hard with thee now, villain!' And he laughed at me as he rode away, and I—I would not have changed places with the Colonel!"

"And the Bavarians, Gran'père?" asked Marcelle.

"*Pouf!* what was there to grumble at?" said the old soldier. "One might have lived, had they cared to patch him up," and he swayed and tottered with laughter as he sat down again to continue his story.

The blaze of the wood fire was dying into a red mass and in the shadow of the curtain, Étienne groped for one of the prettiest hands in the world, and having found it, clasped it very tightly.

"The whole earth seemed full of the grand army," Gran'père told them. "We of the hussars were in advance, and we were sent from one road to another, across fields, through forests so silent and vast that we felt we must have strayed beyond the wall that marks the world's end; but soon the tangled deeps were noisy with our brave men, all on the march to Moscow, all assured of victory, gay and insolent as conquering soldiers are. We were a devouring army, and the country as we passed



Gran'père took it into his trembling old hands and kissed the hilt.

"Ah! yes, it is not out of trade we have made our money, Madame; but, no, it is a legacy, which is more polite. We are of a high family, but we are not reserved, and we shall always buy our meat from M'sieur, your husband—that is, when we do not kill our own beasts"—and so on.

[illegible]

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sworn to.—See The Times, July 15th, 1864.

It was pleasant meditation, but when morning came, the remembrance of it added bitterness to life.

Again and again Gran'père recalled with vivid words the scenes of war, yet could not, or would not, tell where his treasure was buried; and the farm was bare, and poverty ground upon the Ribots more heavily than ever. Months dragged on like a penance, until that time arrived when it became known that France had declared war against Prussia, and that French troops were to occupy Berlin. Etienne was ordered to join his regiment of marines, and his parting with Marcelle was sad beyond all words.

"It will not be for long, beloved one," he said; "and when I return, who knows but that I may bring a treasure, as the Gran'père did."

"Oh! I fear for thee, Etienne. In this Prussia it may be colder than in Russia, and it may be that thou wilt be frozen, and die beside the camp-fire as did the comrades of Gran'père. Etienne, I cannot let thee go. I, who love thee, need thy love; I must feel the kindness of thy hands when they touch mine, or I shall believe thou art dead, and I must die also."



She crouched down under the old pear tree.

"See, *chérie*, in a month there will be no war. In Berlin we shall say to the Prussian King: 'Imbecile, it is useless to quarrel with us!' And then we shall possess ourselves of some of his country, and leave him mourning whilst we come home again victorious, and with all honours!"

"A month is so long a time, and it may not be as thou sayest, and thou wilt be with the ships, and they go away for many months, and I shall not know where thou art, and when I cannot hold thee in my arms and see by thy dear face that thou art well and happy, I must weep and weep—and die."

"Marcelle, my heart, I am the servant of the Emperor. He bids me go, and I must obey or be shot as a traitor. And the marine battalions, so they say, are to serve on land. For my sake, be well, or I shall have no strength to live. Knowest thou how desolate I shall be without thee?"

"Yes. Oh! yes, my poor Etienne!"

"But when the order comes 'Home!' how lofty will be our joy. I shall come along the Three Fields Lane, down to here, and thou wilt be awaiting me, and I shall whistle and thou wilt call in return, and I will run, and thou wilt run, and then in a moment I shall have thee in my arms, and the beating of thy heart in its love will set me on fire, and I will kiss thee so, and so, and so!"

And at those kisses Marcelle forgot the war, and the parting, and all sadness as she cried:

"And I will return thy kisses, and tell thee that I am not ashamed to let it be known how much I love thee, for thou art the bravest and the best of all men!"

The sadness came coldly upon her again, and she put her hands at either side of his sunburnt face, and looked into his eyes, until she could no longer see for tears. He kissed her, then pressing his face against hers, until it was wet with tears, and withdrawing himself from her, he ran away. She called after him and he returned, and they clung to each other in silence. Again he left her, and this time he did not come back when she sobbed out his name. She crouched down under the old pear tree, just where they had parted.

There Madame found her and wept with her, and smoothed her brown hair with loving hands, and brought her indoors, speaking well of Etienne, very well, and more hopefully of the future than ever she had done before; and she reproved the father with a stern look when he laughed at Marcelle and said that her wounds of love would heal in a week. She told him that Marcelle was her mother's daughter, and loved once and for ever. Then Robert embraced his wife, and said that in affairs of the heart some old fools were exactly like young fools, and that he was one of these himself.

After that day they never mentioned Etienne or the war in Marcelle's presence; and they were very tender with her, and considerate for her comfort. The Gran'père wished her to sit in his chair in the sheltered nook by the fire, and he told her often that the treasure should be all for her when he digged it up again. She tried to be brave, but Madame saw that the little one's sweet face was growing thinner and paler as the months passed and still Etienne did not come. For long they took care that she should not know that Frenchmen were being slaughtered by thousands, and that France was already overrun by German conquerors; but at length she heard of it all, and she cried out that Etienne was dead.

Trouble, and death, and want hovered like eager-waiting vultures over

courageous France, and even the Germans marched into her fair villages, while her peasants armed themselves and made ready to defend their homes with old, rusty weapons of a bygone age; and hatred of the invaders grew fiercer with every day.

Then a great French army began to gather in the neighbourhood, and all the men were bidden to join it; and Robert obeyed the summons quickly, and left the farm to the keeping of Madame. She did not weep when her husband went away, as she had wept for the parting of Marcelle and Etienne. She embraced him many times, and most tenderly; and when he had gone she went on steadily with her work. Marcelle thought her mother did not love as she loved Etienne; but in the night as she awoke, startled, the muffled sound of anguish came beating upon her heart, and she heard the words of prayers that were all for Robert. In the morning, Madame spoke but little, and went again to her work, quietly, as though her husband was in his own fields, and the hours would bring him home again; but she looked weary, and whiteness came sharply out of the dark hair that was brushed away from her temples.

By-and-bye, Gran'père took down his sword from the wall and spent all his time in polishing and sharpening it; and instead of sitting by the fire, he would march up and down the garden, flourishing his sword, and making the cuts and guards with it, just as they used to do in the grand army.

One day came tidings of a great battle, of a French triumph, and the village was in a tumult of rejoicing, and the Gran'père went about telling everyone how the victory had been won; but for Madame and Marcelle there was no gladness, because neither of them knew whether they had reason for thankfulness or mourning.

Then they heard that, in spite of the victory, the French were retreating; and the Gran'père was so angry that he hurried to the door, and shouted to the winds that he longed to cut down the traitors who ordered brave soldiers to fly before the enemy. Very soon another battle was fought, and the booming of the cannon was heard plainly over the hills, bowing down the souls of the country-folk with strange terror, as though it were the wrathful voice of God. Suddenly the road at the end of the lane became thick with escaping French soldiers, some on foot, some in waggons, two or three on a single horse; and the baggage that had laden the waggons was thrown out on the road side—boxes of food, ammunition, and stores of all description strewn the way. Rifles and swords were discarded by thousands, and artillery were abandoned. Occasionally a company, or a portion of a regiment would march by in order, with the officers in command, but too often there were no corps, no officers—only fugitives.

Gran'père crept down the lane and stood behind the hedge as the men streamed past. He was very sorrowful, and full of memories. He saw a box, roughly thrown from a waggon, and one side of it broke out as it fell in the ditch at his feet. Presently he knelt down and dipped his hand into the gaping end, and drew out a little roll of coins, swathed in paper. He put it within the breast of his blouse, and then another and then another, and then another.

One of the fugitives seeing him crouched over the box, halted to examine it, and cried to his fellows that it was a paymaster's chest of money; and a number of them stooped and helped themselves to its contents. Gran'père did not try to get more, but tottered back, up the



He dipped his hand into the gaping end.

lane, chuckling, and talking to himself. He was shaking with excitement when he entered the farmhouse, but he would not sit down in his chair and rest.

"I must dig it deep," he muttered, seeming not to notice Madame or Marcelle, "I must dig it very deep." He searched for a spade and found one, and went into the garden, Madame following him curiously, for since she could remember he had never attempted to dig, and she hoped now that at last he was going to unearth the golden bees.

He went down the garden, right to the end of it, where was the wood-stack, safe and orderly under its thatched covering. He gazed about him aimlessly, and Madame hid behind him. He moved away from the wood-stack, looking anxious, and she heard him saying:

"No, no! Ribot, thou hast forgotten! Where is it? Where?"

He went up the path a little way, and then came back. He stood and started at an old pear-tree. He smiled; and Madame knew that the search was over.

"Ah! Thou didst not forget, then, *mon ami*! It is here," and he began to dig in the frozen soil. Soon he ceased, panting and coughing with his efforts.

"My Robert will be rich," he wheezed as he leaned on the spade. Once more he tried to dig, but the hole was still shallow when he had finished.

"It is not deep enough. Robert will find it too soon, and waste it in his riotous youth," said Gran'père, dissatisfied. Then came another fit of coughing, and he added: "It must do."

Taking the coins from the breast of his blouse, and wrapping them in a cotton handkerchief, he put them into the hole, drew the earth over them, and trampled it down. He returned towards the house, and when he entered it, Madame ran to the old pear-tree, and, throwing aside the loose soil with her hands, pulled out the handkerchief and its store of silver francs. She was counting them, almost breathless with delight, when a strong hand seized her by the shoulder, and a deep voice cried:

"Pardon! Madame, this money, it is ours."

"But no, M'sieu, it is the Gran'père's money," she answered rapidly.

"Madame is mistaken. We are of the 117th regiment, and this money is from our treasure chest."

"No, no, no!" she cried despairingly: "we are so poor! It is ours, it must be ours!"

"It is impossible," the soldier said. He carried no rifle and no haversack; but he still wore his sword-bayonet, and he placed his hand upon it with intention.

"Ah! you are brave soldiers to run before the Prussians and to make war on women!"

"Madame, I am justice," he said with a theatrical air, "and to justice there is neither man nor woman—only the innocent or guilty!"

She turned and tried to run, possessed by the thought that she would die rather than part with the money; but he was too quick for her, and she tripped over his outstretched foot, and fell heavily. There she lay for a moment, stunned in the midst of the bright, scattered silver. The soldier began to pick up the coins.

Two pieces were left within Madame's reach, and these she clutched. She rose with some idea of attacking the robber, but his business was done, and with a laugh he forced his way through the hedge and disappeared. Madame ran indoors, almost drivelling in her passion of rage and tears.

"We are robbed—we are robbed!" she called to Marcelle; and little by little she told her story.

Marcelle felt none of the keen regret that her mother was experiencing. Etienne was worth more than all the money of the world to her, and the loss of a few francs was as nothing when she was full of the grief of his absence. Francs would buy food and shelter; but if Etienne were dead, she wished to follow him, and poverty would bring death to her all the sooner; but she consented to go and seek with Madame in the garden, and the two peered and spied under every loose clod of earth, behind every withered bush, wherever a coin might possibly lurk. Altogether they found seventeen francs, and when Marcelle went back to the kitchen, almost frozen with the cold wind, Madame still remained out of doors, hunting for stray coins.

In the early morning she was again in the garden, and the fire was not kindled as usual when Marcelle came downstairs, for Madame could think of nothing but these francs; and when a little before noon she found yet another one, which had been concealed between the knotted surface-roots of a bush, she called out to her daughter:

"See, lazy one, there is more treasure here! May you die of cold and hunger for your laziness. *Ciel!* That I should have an ungrateful child, a sluggard and a stupid one!"

These were the first harsh words that Madame had ever spoken to Marcelle. Gran'père began to comfort the girl, and to fondle her hands, telling her:

"Ah, but you shall have a grand *dot*, my pretty Marcelle. I have hidden it so well, and the silver is for you, and the gold for little Robert!"

The past two days had aged him much, and he forgot that Robert was

an elderly man, and that Marcelle was Robert's daughter. They were all little ones to him now. He sat over the fire and laughed softly and rubbed his frail hands together, until the cough seized him and shook him so violently that he lay back motionless for long afterward. When Madame came in to dinner, she insisted that the door should be left open so that she could watch over the garden; and the biting-cold seized upon the whole house, and the Gran'père's cold grew worse, and he became so weak that he was not able to chuckle or tell the story of his buried treasure. Madame continued to search all the afternoon, and just before evening she was again rewarded by the discovery of a franc.

It was very cold that night, and Gran'père shivered even in his warm corner behind the curtain. Madame sat musing about the francs that perhaps were yet lying about the garden, and annoying herself with the idea that a thief might come in the night, and in some place that she had overlooked might find silver. Also, she pictured herself walking carelessly down the garden and quite by chance striking her foot against a clod of earth, and the clod would shift or split, and there, beneath it, would be a small shining white heap of money. She would pounce upon it, and . . . the shock of pleasure would break the dream, and she would commence to weave another one, exactly like it. Marcelle was knitting, and trying not to think of the morrow. Any one of the coming days might be for her the most terrible day that ever dawned, and she feared each one.

The log in the fireplace crumbled a little underneath, and with a silken snow of ashes settled down. The Gran'père was roused by the slight noise, and opened his eyes; and before he could shut them again there came a great knocking at the door. Marcelle sprang up and stood staring, with her hands clasped together on her breast; but Madame was not afraid.

She rushed and took the Gran'père's sword down from the wall, shrieking in a sudden fury that she would cut down the robber, that she would kill him without mercy. She commanded Marcelle to open the door, so that as the man entered she could slash at him freely. She threatened the girl, who said that it was not likely to be a robber, but rather some poor fugitive.

"They are all robbers," she exclaimed wildly, "both our men, and the Prussians. Thou art in league with them, thou woul'st have me robbed, ungrateful that thou art—but this time it shall not go so easy with any of them!" and she flourished her weapon.

The man outside called to them.

"Marcelle! Marie!"

Marcelle knew the voice.

"It is my father!" she cried, and tried to force Madame to relinquish the sword.

Madame turned on her, like one mad.

"It is someone who tries to deceive us! I say that it is a robber. Open the door, I tell thee, that I may kill him!"

"It is my father! Father! Father!" reiterated Marcelle; and Robert called to her in return.

"I am frozen! Open quickly, or I shall fall and die here!"

"It is father!" cried Marcelle again, almost frantic at the delay, and yet not daring to open the door lest Madame should strike as Robert entered. "Put away that sword!"

"It is to deceive me that he names us," screamed Madame, "but I will not be robbed again! Open the door, Marcelle, or I will do so, since he might find our treasure in the garden!"

She ran swiftly to the door, unbolted, and threw it open, and lifted up the sword to strike. Marcelle flung herself upon her mother, and bore her backward as Robert staggered in, fainting with fatigue and hunger, his clothes torn, his head bound up in bloody linen. The sword fell clattering to the ground, and Madame was on her knees at her husband's feet, embracing him.

She told him all about the stolen francs while Marcelle barred the door again, and put more wood on the fire, and made hot some soup, and some water; and Robert having taken some soup and warmed his hands in the water, huddled himself over the fire, shuddering. How ill he looked! His cheeks were sunken, and on his head was a frightful cut that had been given him by a Frenchman, who was imbecile with fear, at a time when whole squadrons of cavalry escaped by cutting their way through the fugitives that blocked the road.

Madame did not seem to understand how he was suffering. She sat beside him, her eyes glowing feverishly, repeating always that there was more silver in the garden, much more, and if it could be found, they would no longer be poor; and next day, she said, they must all rise early, and begin the hunt all over again. It was Marcelle who bathed Robert's head, and helped him to bed.

After that she sat up nearly all night, burning his uniform, so that none should know he was of the army; and she pronounced herself to be a wicked one, since she had wished for death, when her good father so sorely needed her aid.

In the morning came a thaw; and at daybreak Madame rose from her bed, and tried to drag Robert from it, ill though he was. In the end she fell in a fit upon the floor, almost smothered in the blood that streamed from between her lips. Very soon she was in bed again, and so weak

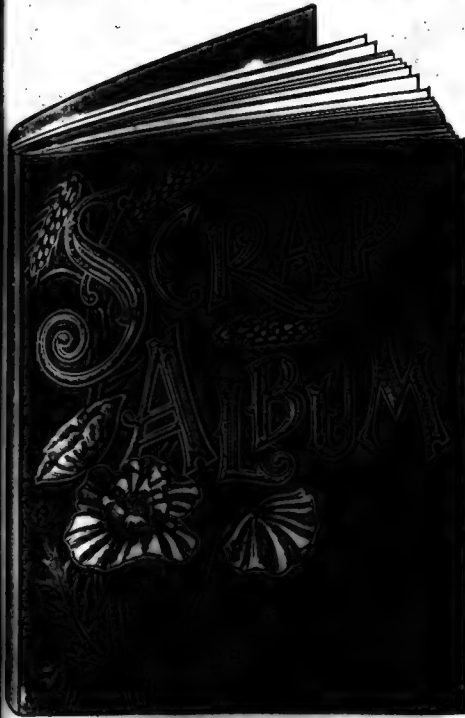


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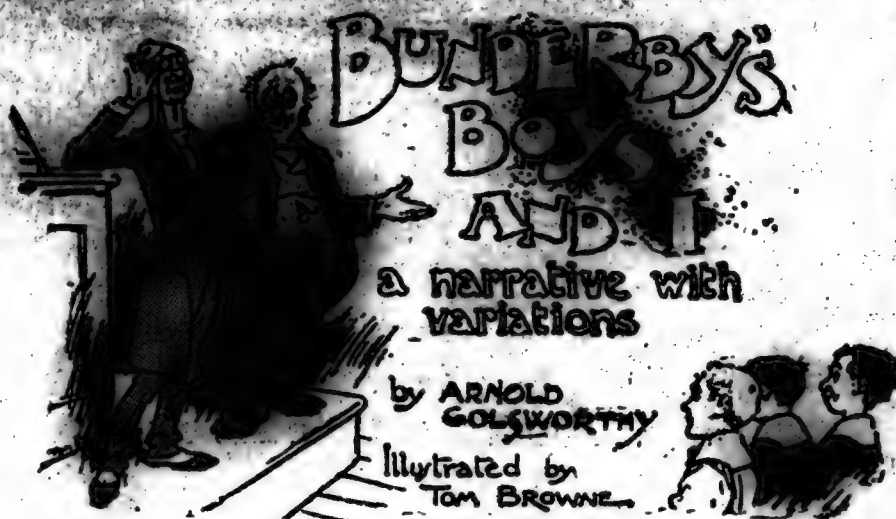
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THEM.**



CHAPTER I.

I TAKE UP MY POSITION AT THE SCHOOL.

You see, Dr. Bundersby had offered me the post of assistant master in his very select School for the Sons of Gentlemen, and I had closed on the offer. The excellent Doctor had explained to me that he required the help of a worthy young man of education with a pure-white moral character that would bear close scrutiny in a good light. He had evidently read my disposition before coming to me, as I am just that kind of person. My education stretches from the "Greco Grammatica" to halfpenny nap, and my moral character is such that in all the years I have used it, I have never been found out.

I did not anticipate any difficulty in handling a class of mere boys. After all, what is a boy? He is simply an immature human being with an abnormal development of criminal instincts. I was confident I could hold a section of the coming race of sinners in check with one hand. Talking to a class of boys was, I considered, quite a different matter from addressing a grown-up audience. The boys could not indulge in frenzied cheers and "interruptions," and if they should have a poor opinion of my mental capacity they could not get up and admit it, and afterwards continue to sit on a hard form with comfort.

I flattered myself that I was in for a soft thing, as in a general way I am a poor speaker when an audience has got the bit between its teeth and is commencing to buck. I have addressed public audiences on several occasions, contrary to the earnest appeals of those who love me, and desire that on my return home I shall arrive in one piece; but I do not think I have been a success, otherwise I should probably have heard somebody say so.

With a class of boys, however, I felt it would be different. The boy is debarré by his very profession from embarrassing criticism, and you have only to toy nonchalantly during your oration with a saucy-looking 3ft. cane to be sure of having the house with you all the time. In my opinion there would be a minimum of disorder at public meetings



I arrived at Dr. Bundersby's one joyous spring morning.

It was made clear to the audience at starting that the inevitable penalty for interruption would be a sore place in a useful part.

I arrived at Dr. Bundersby's one joyous spring morning. The birds were twittering in the balmy air, and the leaves of the trees were very dew and very green. These circumstances are not, I believe, very unusual in the country in the month of the year; but most novelists, I find, consider it necessary to occasionally remind the reader that when wind blows it rattles the leaves of trees, and that when the sun goes to bed not a fine evening the sky shines at the night. I should not like anyone who looked for descriptive passages in this great work to feel that the goods had not been properly supplied. Hence my comment as above. Nor should I like to disappoint my editor, who expects it to be a paying one at the rate of £10 a thousand for it. I am not going to record the details of any feature of the work, as it will be a matter of this work,

assorted menagerie. If I were to become a boy again, I think I would always feel the deepest sympathy for the new master. I know now what it is to be there.

It is true that under such circumstances the object on the platform is secure from discourteous interruptions and dissentient voices; and yet on the whole I think I prefer these drawbacks to the silent stare of a hundred boyish faces, with their cold look of withering scepticism. As we entered the room a dead silence reigned. I took my place beside the Doctor on the raised platform, and, with the view of rendering my appearance the more imposing, I stuck my glass in my right eye and endeavoured to take stock of my surroundings with an air which I trusted would strike the unsophisticated observer as being remarkably cool and calculated.

I may say in passing that my eyesight is quite normal, and that I have no legitimate use for an eyeglass at all. But on one occasion I had seen a member of the aristocracy at a political meeting freeze the disorderly element into admiring silence by a one-eyed stony stare of this kind, and I had naturally concluded that what could pulverise a gathering of aggressive politicians would reduce a group of mere, half-baked boys to sheer pulp.

As it happened, however, I was out in my figures. I had got the eyeglass, but had unhappily omitted to acquire the stony stare with it, and from the start it was clear that there was a shortage in the weight somewhere.

In my first sweeping glance through the monocle I caught sight of a boy's face, magnified about three times its usual size; while I could see an abnormally large hand magnified to match, desperately stuffing a pocket-handkerchief into the mouth part of the face. In the excitement of this startling revelation, the eyeglass broke loose from its moorings, as it were, and, falling on the desk before me, shattered itself all up.

The next moment a half-stifled giggle of large dimensions rose from the far corner, and spread itself genially around the class. I was taken with a violent fit of coughing, and the Doctor turned very red. He said if he found out who it was that had started this disorderly mirth, he would make an example of the delinquent.

I sincerely trust, however, that the ringleader was never found out. If I had been one of those boys I should have simply wanted to bowl with delight at the beautiful way in which fate had delivered the new master into our hands.

Indeed, I rather liked the boys better for not attempting to disguise their amusement at the catastrophe. I concluded that they would sober up and be more respectful directly we settled down to serious business; but I had not taken into account the naturally ingrained depravity of the human boy. It was obvious to them that I was a good deal nervous, and unfortunately my efforts to conceal my infirmity only accentuated it. After Dr. Bundersby had said prayers, he opened a drawer in my desk and handed me a long springy cane, observing that while it was his rule to avoid corporal punishment as far as possible, I was not to hesitate to use the weapon if discipline could not be maintained by other means. He then sorted out the class, and departed with one section, leaving me friendless and alone with my own little lot.

I stood for a few moments gazing helplessly at my class, and as I looked along the rows of boyish faces, they seemed to change before my eyes, into the countenances of hardened and experienced misdoers. The bright looks that I had taken to indicate healthy intelligence, were, it was clear to me now, merely the hawklike glare of old offenders watchfully dodging a just retribution I was certain of it; and if any thing were needed to confirm my opinion it was the weird, hacking cough that attacked the entire class the moment the good Doctor had closed the door behind him. This in itself was proof stronger than Holy Writ that I had allowed myself to be dumped down into a mere den of juvenile depravity.

I made an effort to temporise. I addressed the class in a quiet and unobtrusive way,

and if it rains at all during my adventure I shall certainly mention the fact.

It was the last day of the holidays. Dr. Bundersby had a mixed school of day boys and boarders, and some of the latter had already returned. As far as I could judge, these spent their time in going up and down the stairs, or dodging round corners, in order to have the excuse to wish me good-morning and to take stock of the kind of fighter they were to be pitted against. It was not till the following day that I was taken by the Doctor into the main school-room and formally introduced to his large and well-

equipped class, and that I learned the name of the school.

As I spoke, I picked up the cane and made an elaborate movement of holding it away in the bottom of my drawer. On the previous day I had prepared a long speech which I had designed to deliver to them with telling effect, but just as that moment I could only remember the last sentence, in which I declared that they would regard me rather as an older brother than a school-master. So I said that to the class, and then looked upon it with a benign smile to see the effect of my conciliatory utterance.

For a moment or so there was a fearful silence. Then a juvenile ruffian in the second row of desks leant forward and buried his face in his comb-case to smother the laughter that convulsed him from the centre of his back upwards; and a moment later the entire class had caught the complaint and was sniggering with a nine-horse power energy. In the disastrous excitement of the moment I thumped my fist down on my desk and solemnly declared that I would wring the neck of the first boy who laughed again.

This appalling threat had its effect. My immature jail-birds straightened themselves out with a jerk like the mainspring of a watch that has been tracked to its lair by inexperienced hands.

There can be no doubt that this is a clinching argument to debate with a class of young and comparatively unsophisticated boys.

The prospect of having his neck wrung by a total stranger is not one that a healthy boy can contemplate with equanimity. It is not until he has had time to reflect that the facilities for neck-wrangling in this country are somewhat limited, and that, in spite of our boasted commercial supremacy, the supply of this commodity is ridiculously inadequate to the demand—it is not till then that the utter nakedness of the threat is revealed to him, and he finds it funny enough to make him laugh some more. Before however, the class had had time to ruminate with any success on the prospect held out to them, I snatched up a book and opened it.

"We will now take the Roman history lesson," I said quietly but firmly. "Dr. Bundersby has asked me to do my best to make these subjects interesting to you, so that you may find them less irksome than such studies usually are. I want you to ask me any questions you like on the subject as we proceed and I will try and make my replies as interesting as possible. Let us confide in each other, and we shall get along over so much better."

This was a little of my prepared speech. I had remembered it by a lucky accident. It seemed to have a favourable impression on the class. A hand went up immediately, and I nodded cheerily towards the boy who belonged to it. He was a bright, rosy-cheeked boy of twelve or so, and, at first glance, his countenance was calculated to inspire one with a new confidence in human nature. It was not until I had seen a little more of him that I found this veneer of healthy innocence covered a large sink of depravity a foot or so deep. Indeed, after a brief experience of him, I was amazed that I had not at once detected the evidences of a prodigious career of crime that stood out, as it were, in beads upon him. But I encouraged him at that moment in all good faith, and looking at him with a patronising smile, I said:

"Well—and what is your name?"

"Ogilvie, sir," he replied in a tone that seemed to me in my sad ignorance of juvenile human nature to have a singularly honest ring about it.

"Well, Ogilvie—what is it?"

"I was only going to say, sir, that there's been a hole made in the floor of the refectory."

"Ah, indeed," I commented with a genial smile, little suspecting the scandalous influence at work on me, "who made the hole?"

"Bats, sir!" replied the accomplished young scoundrel without moving a muscle of his face, while the class broke into a roar of laughter positively swayed to and fro in uncontrollable delight.



Are you reading "A Dash for a Throne," Mr. A. W. Marchmont's new serial, in the ATHLETIC RECORD? It has only just begun, and "P.W." readers should start right in with it at once.

My first impulse was to throw a Greek grammar or something equally heavy at Master Colville, and to formally notify him that if I had any more of his truck I would drag him up to my desk by his hair and flay him alive before the whole class. But the next moment I found myself busily engaged in the mere effort of preserving my dignity. The laughter of healthy boys is very contagious, and I badly wanted to join in the joke, and then to offer to cap it with a better one. Before I had quite given my dignity away, however, I managed to fish the cane out from the bottom of my drawer, and, rapping the desk with it ominously, to command "Silence!"

At the back of the room two boys, taking advantage of the confusion, had formed a very limited company for the purpose of putting a third boy under the desk against his will, while the dull groans for mercy that proceeded from the middle of the class seemed to point to the fact that some boy down there out of sight was being gradually but certainly slaughtered. And in the middle of the indescribable uproar, the door opened and Dr. Bunderby walked into the room.

At the same instant an air of goodness and sanctity that you could have felt with gloved hand settled on the class. The long rows of round, boyish faces made up an atmosphere of innocence and purity that will ever be green in my memory. And the silence was such that the efforts of the boy who had been forced under the desk against his will to get his breath back in an unobtrusive way, were distinctly audible.

"Let me see," said the good Doctor, rubbing the back of his neck softly and looking at me with a puzzled expression, "what class is this?"

"The Roman History class, sir," I said promptly. "Dear me," said the Doctor, "I should hardly have recognized it as that. You will quite understand the necessity for keeping careful discipline, Mr. Smith."

"Oh, quite, sir," I said with an air of confidence which I trusted was convincing. "I was about to maintain discipline when you entered the room."

"Just so," he replied quietly—he was always exasperatingly quiet—"and now I should like you to go and assist in the French class, and I will continue here. Roman History is a favourite topic of mine."

I bowed and went to the door accordingly, while the Doctor ascended the raised platform and took my chair. As I left the room a small wad of blotting-paper that had been carefully rolled struck me sharply on the right ear. I do not think, however, that Dr. Bunderby could have been guilty of so wanton an act of aggression, and besides it did not come from his direction.

(More of this next week.)

Royalty in Church Titles.

Of the ecclesiastical titles which the Popes have in former times bestowed upon monarchs of different countries, only four remain. The Emperor of Austria bears the title of "Apostolic King of Hungary," the King of Spain has that of "Catholic Majesty," the King of Portugal is "Most Faithful Majesty," and Queen Victoria is "Defender of the Faith."

Other titles with which the Catholic Church has honoured princes and nations have fallen into disuse owing to change of circumstances. The monarchs of England alone retain the ecclesiastical designation in spite of such alteration. We know that the King of France was the "First Son of the Church," and the King of Poland rejoiced in the appellation of "Right Faithful King," but these titles have disappeared with the monarchs who bore them.

The Spaniards claim that the title borne by their kings is of very ancient date. It was bestowed upon King Alfonso of Asturias (789-757) for his battles against the Moors; it was moreover borne by several kings of Castile and Navarre. When Pope Leo VI. granted it to Ferdinand V., he merely renewed it for the House of Arragon.

Unlike most others, the title of "Most Faithful Majesty," granted to King John V. of Portugal in 1748, is employed in the first person as well as the third.

The right to place the word "Apostolic" before the title of King or Queen of Hungary was granted to the Emperor Maria Theresa in 1788. The Pope mentioned in his letter that the title had been borne in past ages by the Kings of Hungary, but its actual origin is unknown.

The French title was at first "Most Christian Majesty"; it was given to one of the Merovingian rulers. It was afterwards altered to "First (or Eldest) Son of the Church."

Henry VIII of England received the designation of "Defender of the Faith," because he was supposed to have written a book against the teachings of Luther.

The Kings of Sicily were called "Helpers, or Shields of Christendom," and the Swiss were "Defenders of the Church."

Coincidence.

"SOMEHOW, I'm awfully stupid to-night," remarked young Borum, languidly, the other evening.

"Indeed you are," retorted Miss Outting, somewhat impulsively.

"Do you really mean that?" asked the young man in surprise.

"I merely indorsed your remarks; didn't you just now assert that you were stupid?" she queried.

"Yes," he responded, "but I only said so without thinking."

"And up to the time you spoke of it," she replied, "I only thought so without saying it."

The Biking Italian.

CYCLING is much more general in Italy than in England. In the principal towns there is hardly a boy who does not possess a bicycle, and the fashionable people all go in for them.

Formerly the machines were imported, for the most part, from England, but now there are large factories at Ohilan, Turin, and elsewhere, and the home output is very considerable. For high-grade machines the parts are still largely obtained from England, but the Italians are evidently fully alive to the importance of the trade.

They are not only vigorously competing with the foreigner on Italian soil, but are actually carrying the war into the enemy's country, and are making nipples, pedals, hubs, and other parts for exportation to England, where they find a ready market.

Snowball Showers.

MORE than one explorer in cold climates has noted the curious phenomenon of a "snowball shower." The balls, it is true, are not very big, the average being about the size of a hen's egg, but they are true snowballs for all that; compressed globes of snow, not little lumps of ice or hail.

A fall of the kind occurred in North London in March, 1859, and at the time it was observed that the balls seemed five times as dense and compressed as ordinary snow, and in no way to be told from the usual hand-made missiles. They had fallen during the night, and were strewn many layers thick over a very large area.

No cause—except a doubtful electrical one—can be ascribed for the strange phenomenon; and mountaineers are apt to discredit the stories of snowball showers told them by the old guides, till suddenly in the midst of an ordinary storm, they find themselves assailed as though by myriads of mischievous schoolboys.

The Suspicious Sailor.

SEA CAPTAIN: "Do you mean to say that they take gas right out of the ground, and light their houses with it?"

Landaman: "Certainly. Out in Canada we used to cook our food, light the house, and make our fires with it."

"Did you see that done yourself?"

"Of course."

"Had something to drink at the time, hadn't you?"

"I never drink. Thousands see it done every day."

"Pretty hard drinkers, ain't they?"

"No, indeed. Why, my own wife used to cook the meals with a natural gas stove."

"Did she tell you so?"

"Of course."

"Never knew her to take opium or anything like that, did you?"

"Of course not. Natural gas is nothing remarkable. Why in the world are you so suspicious, not to say insulting, when I tell you about it?"

"I was only acting the way you landmen do when we tell you of the sea-serpents and other queer things we see on the ocean, that's all."

PHOTOGRAPHER (showing proofs): "The expression as you see, is all that could be desired."

Customer: "Yes. I was smiling because you had forgotten to tell me to look pleasant."

SAY THIS AFTER YOUR CHRISTMAS DINNER.

There was a young fellow called Tate,

Who dined with a girl at 8.8,

But I cannot relate

What that fellow called Tate

And his *été-à-tête* ate at 8.8.

"EXCUSE me," said the business manager to the editor, "but you promised to print that puff of Smither's Soap just as I wrote it."

"Well, didn't I?"

"No. It wasn't published at all."

"Did you write on one side of the paper only?"

"Certainly."

"Then I have published the wrong side of the manuscript."

HABITS THAT DRIVE YOU MAD.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUEER TRICKS DROP THEM AT ONCE.

It was Horace, the old Latin poet, who proclaimed the really happy man to be he who understood the causes of things. And, if this is true of anything, it is true of insanity. We are all of us liable, by pursuing certain lines of conduct, to become mad, and P.W. thinks it important that people should know exactly what those lines of conduct are.

There is a far too prevalent notion that it needs an overwhelming disaster to throw a sound man off his mental balance, and that, given health and brains, one can afford to be very careless with them. As a matter of actual fact, however, a man's mental health may be upset, as can his physical, by an accumulation of little things, trifling in themselves, but in the aggregate sufficient to make him a positive danger to Society.

And among these "little things" are habits. It seems really dreadful to reflect that there are some two dozen of these, which, perfectly innocent, will nevertheless, if adopted, render one insane, but it is so.

First of all there is the reckoning mania. Its affects are far worse than the name implies, though its beginnings are of the slightest.

In the first stage the person is seized with a desire to count something. It may even commence with his checking the number of paces he is taking, or by his adding up too many columns of figures.

Then, as the habit grows, his state gets worse and worse. He can do nothing, say nothing, think nothing, without this terrible desire to count coming over him. It is impossible for him to follow any occupation, and his conversation is constantly interrupted by his attempting to add something up, no matter what, if it is only the pieces of furniture in the room.

Very frequently it is not till the last and most acute stage that the patient goes to see the doctor. Then, as a rule, something very extraordinary happens. The patient commences to state his complaint, and then breaks off hurriedly. "Excuse me a moment," he says, and then, when the physician notices that the number of buttons on his waistcoat are being counted, he knows he has a "reckoner" to deal with.

The fact that the reckoning mania is almost incurable, and that its beginnings are so exceedingly slight should make one doubly cautious of contracting it. The patient will count everything, from chimney pots to rain drops, and his mind is always in a ferment of reckoning.

Another habit mania—and one a great man contracted, to wit, Dr. Johnson—is the tapping mania. With him it took the form of tapping every post he passed with his walking-stick, just as with the great Napoleon the reckoning mania caused him to count the houses in the streets he drove through, two by two.

Unfortunately, however, we have not all the energy of will, and robustness of mind of these two Titans, and the result is that, with ordinary mortals, the tapping mania is apt to have terrible results.

The lengths to which it will carry a man it is positively awful to contemplate. Should it happen that he omits to tap or touch the object as he passes by it, he will return to do so, and he ends by tapping every object of that kind that he sees.

The fact that, once a man's mind gets in the habit of dwelling on one idea, or becomes obsessed by it, he is extremely liable to go mad, is illustrated by an extraordinary case that, were it not vouched for on unimpeachable scientific authority, one would reject as incredible.

A well-to-do retired man of business made a habit of noticing the face and features of almost every woman he came in contact with, to see if she were pretty or not. So far did this mania go with him that, on one occasion, when he had to take a railway journey from London to Manchester, the fact that he forgot to discover what the London station barmaid was like, so annoyed him that he actually travelled back to town to discover. This is the clearest case on record of a man going mad from habit.

There is a well-substantiated case of a man, who, imbued with the notion that 13 was an unlucky number, could not keep it out of his calculations. Everything he saw, everything he was engaged in, seemed to him to suggest the fatal number, until at last melancholia of the most pronounced kind rendered him unfit to be at large.

If you have ever visited a lunatic asylum, you will have found at least one lunatic who persists in walking round and round a more or less accurate circle. And if you had been able to trace out the cause of his insanity you would have found out, most probably, that he went mad originally through his seeing some circular motion and feeling impelled to imitate it.

It may have even been that a humming top caused him to get up and run round and round the room, or that he started to do so when playing with a little child. Too much walking has even been known to produce the same mania in a mild form, and the habit of running, walking or even writing in circles, a form which has an extraordinary attraction for some people, is invariably attended with disastrous results.

But quite the most dangerous habit—of mind, that is—and one against which readers of this article should be warned, is the fear of insanity, which, strangely enough, frequently induces it.

Questions Worth Answering.

REPLIES.

5327. Which Country Forms the Best Object Lesson in the Unsuitability of Parliamentary Government to Backward Races?

The negro Republics of Liberia and Hayti form the most glaring examples; but it would hardly be correct, after all, to describe their Government as parliamentary, and, therefore, better answers might be found among the Central and South American republics. With the exception of Chili, which, thanks to a very large admixture of English and Scotch blood in its best families, stands far ahead of the rest, nearly all these are pitiable parodies on popular government. The grossest corruption and incapacity are thinly veiled by paper constitutions and clouds of high-sounding verbiage. In nearly every case they are ruled by political adventurers, who govern really by force, and will rather plunge the country into the horrors of a revolution than forego the spoils of office. The result of this deplorable state of things is to be found, first in almost constant turmoil, which are merely faction fights on a huge scale; and, secondly, in the backward condition of the countries, in spite of their very great natural advantages; and in the further fact that, where these advantages are developed, it is usually by foreign brains and foreign capital.

5328. Which Part of the World has Witnessed the Greatest Reversal of British Policy?

It is difficult to locate any part of the globe where British policy has not been largely reversed. In Europe we no longer hold it as gospel that every quarrel between our neighbours there concerns us. In Asia, India is no more ruled by John Company, which, for over a century, was reckoned the only possible form of Government for it. Australia, in place of being the mere dumping ground for criminals, which was for many years considered as its destiny, is now one of the most favoured colonies of the Empire. In Africa, British policy, both in Egypt and at the Cape, has been frequently reversed since 1879. Probably the greatest reversal of all, however, is found in the difference between the policy pursued in 1775 towards the American colonies, and the treatment extended to colonies—partly the same—in 1867 by the British North-American Act, which created the Dominion of Canada, with provision for popular representation beyond even the dreams of those that fought for it ninety-two years previously.

5329. Which Material Feature of Modern Civilization not a Food-Stuff could we Least Easily Do without?

Coal. This commodity has become an absolute necessity of modern life. A failure in the coal supply would deprive us at one blow of the means of locomotion, light, warmth, and cooked food. It would more than treble the cost of all commodities which are at present manufactured by steam power. In our great cities it would at once cause an unprecedented famine, as it would be impossible to meet the requirements of the markets. It would convert our navy into a collection of useless hulks, and would probably establish Norway or Sweden as the greatest naval power in the world. It would make Britain the greatest commercial power, as this is the only country which uses oil almost entirely for purposes of locomotion, and which has enormous stores of that commodity within its borders. Countries with large populations would become uninhabitable, and the world would drift back into a pastoral condition. The vast majority of stocks and shares would be converted into so much waste paper. It would probably take at least a century to repair the devastation that would ensue.

5330. What Characteristic Endowment is Common to the Majority of the World's Greatest Men?

It has been said with truth that no man can become great without possessing imagination in a high degree, and if we take imagination in the widest sense of the term, this is probably the best answer to the question. It must not, of course, be limited to the faculty of invention, because it means much more than this, and chiefly the power of projecting one's self into the minds and thoughts of others, and by that means of directing their actions. Obviously no one can be great in art or literature without imagination, and the same, in another application of the word, is true of the soldier, the scientist, the financier, and the prince of industry. In some of these senses might be rendered by the Americanism "grip"—the faculty of mentally seeing all round a subject and grasping its essentials and dispensing with its unimportant portions. Energy and determination are also essentials to greatness in most cases, but millions have been possessed of these qualities without arriving at greatness, but no one ever yet did so without possessing imagination as here defined.

5331. Which Tool has Done most to Promote Civilization?

The earliest work of civilization was that of subduing the wild forces of Nature, and the first tool that man used was also the most important. This was the hammer, the first form of which was probably a stone held in the hand. With the aid of this was fashioned the first flint-axe which bowed down the first forest tree, and with it was struck the first stone chisel which hollowed out the first canoe, and so made navigation possible. It is not too much to say that without the hammer in some form man must have remained little, if anything, above the animals, since he would not even have been able to crack a nut which was too hard for his teeth. The mechanical arts would have been impossible. No substitute has ever been found for it, with the exception, perhaps, of the iron-rolling press, and in its most recent development, the steam hammer, it is an absolute essential in industry, without which the world could not progress. It is, in fact, the parent of all other tools, since none of them could have been fashioned without it, and therefore it follows that it has done most to promote civilization.

5332. Which Foreign Alliance would, just now, be Most Useful to this Country?

Taking the word useful in its lowest sense, and for the sake of argument granting the impossible, the answer would be Russia; because, from the strictly utilitarian point of view, such an alliance would release us from our greatest embarrassments and clear most obstacles from our future path. It would make France helpless, settle the long vexed questions of the near East, and the more recent, but no less burning, problems of the far East. It would give us an absolutely free hand in Egypt and the rest of Africa, and it would relieve us from the incessant strain of guarding the north-west Indian frontier, crushing rebellions incited by Russian agents, and maintaining Afghanistan as a buffer state. Of possible alliances, one with the United States would be at once the most popular and the most profitable, since this would relieve us from our greatest danger in time of war—the stoppage of our food supplies. The moral effect, however, of such an alliance would be infinitely greater even than its military or political effect. It would mean the re-union of the Anglo-Saxon race, and a combination of forces which would to all intents and purposes dominate the world. Next to this the most profitable alliance that we could form would probably be one with Japan, the "England of the East."

5333. Is there any Connection between the Colour of Flowers and their Perfume?

Yes. An exhaustive examination of flowering plants reveals that only about 10 per cent. of them are odourless. The red flowers and those which have combined colourings approximate to this average, while yellow flowers are slightly below it. Of blue flowers only 5 per cent. are scented, and in those of a violet colour

the proportion is still further reduced. White flowers are most odorous, 15 per cent. of them being fragrant, and it is a matter of common observation that the white varieties of garden flowers are generally more highly scented than the coloured members of the same species. It has been noted that flowers of a brownish hue have usually a disagreeable smell, and in the case of the stapelias or carrion-flowers the odour is scarcely distinguishable from that of putrescent meat, and proves attractive to those insects which feed on decaying substances. As a rule, where the inflorescence is brilliant and conspicuous, perfume is deficient, but many striking exceptions will readily suggest themselves. The perfume, like the colouring of flowers, plays an important part in securing cross-fertilization by the agency of insects, and the presence of one attractive factor enables the plant to dispense in many cases with the other.

5334. Which of our Sovereigns Most Strikingly Exemplified the Law of Heredity?

All things considered, Elizabeth would appear to furnish the best answer. No two human beings could well have been more different than Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn, and their daughter Elizabeth possessed in an extraordinary degree the characteristics of both. It is this fact which explains the marvellous contradictions of her character. From Henry she inherited her domineering spirit, her quick temper, her impatience of contradiction, and her great intellectual capacity. In addition to this, she inherited the harsh, masculine Tudor voice, and also that carelessness, often amounting to meanness, in money matters which was so much more pronounced in the Seventh than in the Eighth Henry. On the other hand, from her mother she inherited the frivolity, the lightness of morals, the love of dress, and that passion for the admiration of the other sex which, no doubt, had much to do with bringing the unfortunate Anne Boleyn to her untimely end.

5335. Which is the Best Historical Example of being "Curled with a Granted Prayer?"

It is furnished by the history of Spain. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the extirpation of heresy was the most fervent prayer of the Spanish sovereigns and people, and the maintenance of the Catholic faith was the first consideration in all questions of State policy, under such kings as Philip II. and Philip III. The prayer was fully answered. All Jews, Moriscos, and reformers within the limits of Spain were either converted, expelled, or put to death. The result was national decadence. The greatest monarchy in the world has sunk into a power of the third magnitude, stripped of almost every shred of her magnificent colonial empire, and without the slightest influence in the councils of the civilized world. It is not suggested that the Catholic religion is responsible for this national paralysis. To suppress all forms of thought but one is to destroy mental activity, crush originality, and stangle social growth, and the result would have been the same had any other form of religion been established by similar means.

5336. In which Career in this Country is Success Dependent most on Intrinsic and least on Acquired Capacity?

Literature. The writer, whether of prose or verse must be born; he cannot be made. No amount of the severest training could possibly enable a man or woman to write even a moderately good story or poem. The capacity must be inherent. On the other hand, there are countless examples to show that, granted this capacity, it is all-sufficient. Some of the world's greatest writers have been men and women alike of small education and small experience. For instance, a century of education, if that were possible, would not fit a man, minus the gift of writing, to produce another Pilgrim's Progress or another Pickwick Papers. Every other career needs more or less training, and most require large technical acquisition as well, while in literature the highest triumphs have been, and can be won, merely by the industrious use of the inborn gift.

QUESTIONS.

5337. Which is the most valuable wine?
5338. In these days rampant in history of a coalition of nations undertaking with complete and permanent success the destruction of a great Power?
5339. In these days rampant in history of a coalition of nations undertaking with complete and permanent success the destruction of a great Power?
5340. In these days rampant in history of a coalition of nations undertaking with complete and permanent success the destruction of a great Power?
5341. In these days rampant in history of a coalition of nations undertaking with complete and permanent success the destruction of a great Power?
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CONDITIONS.

5346. In these days rampant in history of a coalition of nations undertaking with complete and permanent success the destruction of a great Power?
5347. In these days rampant in history of a coalition of nations undertaking with complete and permanent success the destruction of a great Power?
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5350. In these days rampant in history of a coalition of nations undertaking with complete and permanent success the destruction of a great Power?

SAM: "There are microbes in kisses."
HE: "Aren't your microbes lonely?"

BORNY: "How are you goin' to keep Christmas Day?"

TOMMY: "Dunno. Is there any way to keep it so it'll last till next one comes?"

"MR. YASSINI, may I ask why you always dip your knife in your glass of water before cutting your steak?"

"It is a little trick I learnt from a fellow who worked in a rubber factory."

"EXCUSE me," exclaimed the timorous man, "but may I disturb you for a few minutes on a matter of considerable importance to myself and possibly of some concern to you?"

"No, sir," replied the disagreeable citizen, "not unless you promise not to waste as much time talking business as you do apologising."

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TROOPS ON A TROOPER

AND THE FUN THEY HAVE AT YULETIDE.

CHRISTMAS is very apt to see one or two troopships or transports, as they are now called, ploughing the deep crowded with some 1,500 soldiers. November is the busiest trooping month of the year, and as troopers are not renowned ocean sprinters, one leaving Southampton towards the latter end of that month might just be emerging from that hot bed of sharks—the Red Sea—as Christmas Day was breaking.

Tommy Atkins' conception of seasonable conviviality is oceans of beer, not water, and he regrets the fact exceedingly that Christmas should find him tripping ship's planks, instead of barrack floors. Still, if the seas are not overbearing—and, as a rule, they are decidedly respectful in the month of December between the Suez Gulf and Bombay—neither Christmas Eve nor Christmas Day will be allowed to quietly add itself to those gone before.

The fifty odd messes approach the ship's culinary department and treat for the making of "duff"—for Christmas to a soldier is but a mere empty name without a duff. Perhaps, owing to this devastating rush of commissions, the puddings are rather a lottery. They may happen to be first-class, but it would be tempting Providence to expect such a one. Truth to tell, a great many of "ocean cooked" plum duffs, while tolerably shapely and of immense sustaining properties, betray remarkably rubbery and compact qualities. The old hands, ever willing at home or abroad to "sway their share of duff for liquor, find the market all against them here.

There is no welcome allowance of two shillings per man from the canteen fund, nor free casks of ale presented by its contracting brewers, as in barracks. Practically the only official recognition of Christmas, so far as the rank and file aboard ship are concerned, is the serving out of an extra pint of porter each, and, of course, a presumed laxity of discipline. This latter benefit is naturally not so much appreciated as it is ashore, where the private has, a glorious feeling of emancipation consequent on the fact that he may drink his pocket empty, and sleep his potatoes off unmolested beneath the mess-room table.

Albeit Tommy Atkins on the swelling billows of the Indian Ocean has a fierce, rather than a convivial, desire that the festive season should not pass without a "bust up." The nights in these quarters are tolerably certain to be fine, which is one source of consolation to the men, who readily recall many cold, muggy Christmas evenings in Britain.

On Christmas Eve there is a gathering of the clans on the moon-lit decks above. Plenty of prime tobacco still remains from the two pounds supplied to each man by government free of duty, and with a thousand Army pipes in full blast, what matters it that a man's liquor can be gauged in mouthfuls.

"Order, boys," yells a self-established master of ceremonies. "Brother Jones Jones, the humdrum comedian of X Y Company, is about to give one of his astonishing character sketches without toga—that is, character togs."

Enormous cheers greet this announcement; but the acoustics being defective and the area of the auditorium very large, Private Jones is not heard to great advantage and some plotting takes place on the outer fringe of the crowd. A few minutes later an open disruption sees the establishment of a rival convivial party. Within an hour half-a-dozen companies are going concert pitch on different tacks, drowning the wish-swish of the billows against the ship's side and cheating the ear even of the all-pervading throb of the great engines.

Suddenly one company makes an astonishing discovery. It believes it has unearthed the finest comic warbler on board ship, and boldly says so and openly defies competition. The imperative is vigorously assailed by other clans, and rival songsters are run against each other amid a pandemonium of applause and counter-applause.

Songs of every description are sung to the accompaniment of a variety of musical instruments, from a cornetina to a banjo or a penny whistle. It doesn't matter how the tune goes so long as the words and performance are funny. Occasionally there is found a man who can sing "Home Sweet Home!" and this solves the company for a time. About midnight the immense concourse consolidated again break up for their respective hammocks, after spending what is probably the healthiest Christmas since babyhood.

What the Toys Said.

THE Hobby Horse said
As he shook his head:
"It's a long, long way to go
O'er the white snow's foam
To the Little Boy's home;
But I hear the tin horn blow,
And must race away till I'm out of breath
To the Little Boy who will ride me to death!"

And the Toy Drum said:
"I've a hardened head,
And away on my sticks I'll go
From this toy dome
To the Little Boy's home—
I can beat my way through the snow!
Away! away! till I'm out o' breath,
To the Little Boy who will beat me to death!"

And the Toy Doll said,
As her gold-crowned head
Shone over the wintry snow;
"To the Little Girls
Of the golden curls
In a fairy coach I'll go!
Far—far away, till I'm out o' breath
To the Little Girls who will kiss me to death!"

But the Elephant said:
"If that way I'm led,
And they treat you all so bad,
I tell you now
That there'll be a row,
And they'll wish they never had!
For I'll pack them all in my trunk, you see,
And lock it, and throw away the key!"



FOND MOTHER: "I'm very sorry to have to put you to bed without any dinner, but you were a bad boy."
FREDDY: "If you're really sorry, ma, have something for dinner I don't like."

A WOMAN selects a husband by herself, but she takes three other women with her to help pick out a hat.

It was Desdemona who looked into Othello's face and repeated the immortal words:
"Let me kiss him for his smother."

"ARE you going to write a note telling Santa Claus what you want this Christmas?" asked little Davis Gaxman of Benny Bloombumper.

"Of course," replied Benny with a wink of his other eye, "and I'm going to give it to papa to post, too."

WASN'T THERE—"This is the poem the magazine publishers returned to you, is it?"
"Yes. They couldn't see anything in it, they said."
"To tell you the truth, I can't either. Did you think you saw anything in it?"
"Yes. I thought I saw a guinea in it."

"VAIN, vain," he cried in agony. "For I am a poor man, while you have been reared up in the lap of luxury."

Into her eyes came a dreamy look, such as ordinary persons affect when their corneas hurt them; but she was no ordinary person.

"One lap gets mighty monotonous," she observed gently, for there was her maidenly reserve to be thought of.

LAWS THAT MAY BE DEFIED.

A COURT OF JUSTICE WITHOUT EXECUTIVE POWER.

THERE is a law court in London of the existence of which few people are aware. This is one presided over by the Chief Rabbi, who is assisted by two *dayanim* (judges). Their court is located in Aldgate, near the Great Synagogue, and is in session twice a week throughout the whole year. Here they decide all disputes among their co-religionists according to Jewish law, as well as other matters concerning ecclesiastical administration. All this is done gratis.

The cases they try are numerous and bewildering in variety, covering, as they do, every conceivable contingency from debt to breach of promise of marriage, from assault to libel and slander.

As might be expected, the majority of cases are in connection with the delicate question of matrimony. Petitions from jilted swains for the return of rings and other presents given to late fiancées, under happier conditions, and actions for breach of promise are everyday occurrences. There also is performed the ceremony which permits a widow to marry a man other than her brother-in-law.

The curious fact about this court is that it has practically no executive power. Generally, its rulings are respected, but there is really nothing to prevent people defying them. The court is certainly in a position to impose certain religious disabilities on refractory litigants, but these are not of a very awe-inspiring character.

The refusal to allow a man to be married in a synagogue who has not submitted to its judgment is not at all terrible when marriage by license is so easy a

matter, and the refusal to allow a man to continue to be a member of a synagogue—a penalty only resorted to in extreme cases—is comfortably borne by one whose religious tendencies are not of the strongest.

The executive power—such as it is—of the Beth Din (House of Judgment), as it is called, was illustrated by a rather theatrical incident which occurred at a wedding ceremony some considerable time back.

It must first be mentioned that when an engagement takes place among foreign Jews, it is customary to draw up a contract of marriage between the intended bride and bridegroom and their respective parents. This sets forth various stipulations, regulating the amount of the dowry, the quantity of furniture to be given by the parents of each, the presents which the groom shall give the bride, the period which shall elapse before the marriage takes place, and the amount which shall be paid by the party who breaks the agreement.

On the occasion in question, a young man, after being party to such

an agreement, became engaged to another girl, and when summoned before the Beth Din by his former sweetheart, he did not deign to appear. Judgment was therefore entered against him by default for the amount—£20—specified in the contract. This he refused to pay.

The jilted maiden, hearing of his prospective marriage, went to the court and informed the judges, whereupon they indorsed her contract to the effect that the young man mentioned therein was not to be married in a synagogue until the amount was paid. Had he heard of this, he might possibly have got married by license; but the girl waited till the day of the marriage, and when all were assembled in synagogue, she produced the document, which would have had the effect of stopping the wedding, had not the groom and his relatives made up best part of the money and given an IOU for the balance, in order to avoid a public scandal.

According to Jewish law, this court has power to grant divorce; but this power is not admitted in this country. Besides, the Jewish law of divorce is in conflict with English law. A Jew, after a certain time, may claim divorce on the ground that his wife is childless. Many such claims are made by foreign Jews, who are sadly disappointed when they are told that the English law does not permit a rabbi to untie the marital knot.

In this connection it may be mentioned that, before Schleswig-Holstein became a part of Germany, there was at the town of Altona a similar court, which was endowed by the King of Denmark with power to enforce its rulings. This court had quite a European fame.

In the bright Tuesday paper, **SHORT STORIES**, you will find a splendid new serial by Mr. C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, who, as readers of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE already know, is the author of the now far-famed "Captain Kettle."

**CARLOS MARIA DOLORES JUAN ISIDORO
JOSE FRANCISCO CARINO ANTONIO
MIGUEL GABRIEL RAPHAEL.**

THE MAN WHO WANTS TO BE KING OF SPAIN.

At the present moment Don Carlos, Duke of Madrid, looms large on the Continental horizon, for he is, as most people know, the Pretender to the Spanish throne, and there are many who believe that he has very good chances of becoming Charles VII. of Spain. Far stranger things have come to pass, and Don Carlos has now an apparently better chance of succeeding to the throne of his ancestors than had Prince Louis Napoleon just before a series of events led to his triumphant installation as Emperor of the French.

Don Carlos was born on the 9th of March, 1848, in a little inn at Labaich, in the Austrian Alps, where his Royal parents were travelling. Notwithstanding the fact that he made his entrance into the world in so unpretentious a fashion, those about him were fully alive both to his own importance and to their own. He was given, as are all Spanish children of noble birth, a long string of names—Carlos Maria Dolores Juan Isidoro Jose Francisco Carino Antonio Miguel Gabriel Raphael.

From his earliest infancy Don Carlos was haunted by a phantom crown, and his position was made harder owing to the fact that there is no doubt that, according to the old Spanish Laws of Succession, he would have become, after his father's death, the Spanish King, and would have been reigning at Madrid. That this did not come to pass is owing to Ferdinand VII., who revoked the Salic law in order that his daughter Isabella might be Queen.

This fact is recognised in all the Courts of Europe, and Don Carlos, who was educated in Austria, has always been treated by all those brought in contact with him, as would be any other king in exile.

While still in his teens, his marriage to a daughter of the Duke of Parma was arranged, and the fact that his bride brought a large dowry with her certainly increased her husband's chances with the Spanish people.

Soon after the wedding, Sagasta, the great Spanish statesman, sought out Don Carlos, and practically offered him the Spanish crown, but the Constitutional form of government was proposed, and to that Don Carlos would not consent. Without losing a moment, the Duke of Madrid, as he was then formally called,

gathered round him all his friends, and under the battle cry, "God, Country, and King," began the picturesque Carlist War, which was continued, on and off, for some years, arousing the wildest enthusiasm all over Europe. Indeed, amongst some of the most popular Carlist officers were many Englishmen and Frenchmen. This Carlist rising—for war it can hardly be called—was one of the most stirring of the many insurrectionary risings with which the history of the nineteenth century has been filled.

Before crossing the frontier into Spain Don Carlos, together with his followers, gathered together under the "Tree of Liberty," in the Bay of Biscay, under whose shade the ancient kings of Spain are said to have always taken their Coronation Oath; and there he solemnly promised to maintain the rights and liberties of Spain.

In the beautiful Venetian palace, which is now the home of Don Carlos and his second wife, are many interesting memorials of the Carlist war, including a shell which exploded almost under the feet of the Pretender. Even more curious, because more pathetic, is a collection of the arms carried by his followers, which include pitchforks, old breechloaders, axes, and clubs.

Fortunately for the Carlists, the Spanish regulars against whom they were pitted were not much better armed than they were themselves, and had it not been for the fact that Marshal Campos was a military genius of the first rank, Don Carlos would probably have gained by entering Madrid in triumph, for the Spanish regulars were in those days devoted to him, and even now, if there were any serious revolution, there is scarce a provincial village in Spain without its quota of men ready to welcome Don Carlos to his own.

As is generally the case with the heirs to an autocratic line of rulers, Don Carlos is very obstinate, otherwise he might, as has been shown, easily have mounted the Spanish throne by consenting to enter one of those "back doors," for which a certain type of Pretender is always seeking, but the idea of reigning as constitutional monarch was abhorrent to him, and he insisted that he must be an autocrat or nothing.

It was also proposed some years ago that Don Carlos should marry the Queen Regent, while his heir, Don Jaime, should become the husband of the Princess of the Asturias.

These suggestions, however, were rejected with great indignation, and within a few years of his first wife's death, Don Carlos married, to please himself, Marie Berthe de Rohan, the daughter of a noble French family, who had long been settled in Austria. The Duchess of Madrid, though not of Royal birth, seems to have brought her husband good luck as well as a fortune.

She is very popular with the Duke's followers, the more so that the whole of her large dowry was devoted to the cause. Last year, on his fiftieth birthday, the Duchess solemnly presented her husband with a sword, on which was engraved the following inscription: "Do not draw me without reason; do not abate me without honour." This sword is a copy of that carried by Don Carlos during the Carlist war.

Although Don Carlos and his first wife, the Princess Margaret of Parma, had five children, of these only one was a son. Don Jaime is a very clever young man, now nearly thirty, who has long been an officer in the Russian army. But he spent his boyhood in England,

for he was educated at the great Roman Catholic school of Beaumont, near Windsor. He speaks English perfectly, and has many intimate friends in the United Kingdom.

Don Carlos early determined that his son should receive a thoroughly practical education, and Don Jaime can swim, row, and ride as well as most British athletes. All those who know him speak well of him; he is a sensible, thoughtful young man, devoted to his profession, and a favourite with his Russian brother officers.

The Duke and Duchess of Madrid are much liked in Venice. They are both very hospitable, and their Palazzo is a great meeting place for any Spaniards passing through Italy. Don Carlos takes his duties as Pretender very seriously, and is in close touch with everything that goes on at Madrid, and during the late Spanish-American war, it was widely believed in Spain that Don Carlos would come and help to fight his country's battles. Indeed, at one time it was stated that he had actually started for Cuba, but if this was so, he must have thought better of it, and

for his own chances of ultimate success, and for a man in his position his doing anything of this kind would have been undignified. He cherished, however, a very bitter feeling towards the former Government, by which Spain has lost the remnant of her former colonial empire, and when he makes another attempt to gain the Spanish throne the late disasters will form a powerful plank in his "platform."

Unlike most Pretenders, Don Carlos is very wealthy. His son alone inherited half a million pounds under the will of the late Comte de Chambord, and from his first wife Don Carlos acquired eight times that sum. However, as may easily be imagined, both the Duke and Duchess of Madrid have many claims on their purse, and nothing is more disastrous to the chances of a would-be king than to have the reputation of being mean. There is little doubt that the fact that the Orleans family are credited with extreme carefulness as regards money matters, is the real reason of their unpopularity in France.

Don Carlos has a most striking personality; he is very dark and tall, but so thick set as to appear short. He has, when he chooses to exert it, all the Spanish charm of manner, and he is a very well educated man. He has always been—as was shown when he was called upon to make the fateful decision as to where his son and heir, Don Jaime, was to be educated—exceedingly fond of the British people, one of his most intimate friends having been the Duke of Hamilton.

MR. GOOSE: "What on earth are we to do, wife? All our supply of anti-fat has been used up for Christmas, and there's New Year's Day still on the calendar."



ROUGH ON AUNTIE.

Tommy: "That church is over two hundred years old."
Clasy: "My auntie says it's only one hundred."
Tommy: "Oh, well, I suppose that's as far back as she can remember."

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 19.

£50 CLAIMED.

Two of the persons whose names were selected in connection with the £250 weekly distribution have this week applied for their money. Their names and addresses are:

MRS. SQUIBBS,
12 Clifton Road,
Maida Vale, W.

THOMAS TAYLOR,
30 Greenmount Street,
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Those people who are £25 poorer through not having applied are:

VINCENT CARROLL, 89 Church Street, Dundalk.
CHAS. BOYD, Union Street, Cupar Angus.
MRS. CHARLES, 26 Gladys Road, Aberdare.
JOHN D. ELLIS, White House, Holt, Norfolk.
GEO. DORSON, Lowick, Northumberland.
A. HARDY, 5 Harrington Road, S.W.
W. FRANKTON, 43 Cinder Bank, Netherton, Worcs.
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**TWENTY £25 NOTES OFFERED
THIS WEEK—TOTAL, £500.**

PERHAPS THERE IS ONE FOR YOU.

This week the Editor of PEARSON'S WEEKLY addresses Ten Envelopes to Ten People in various parts of the Country. Inside each envelope he places a £25 Note, and locks them away in his private safe. All you have to do is to apply to this office by letter, inclosing threepence in stamps, asking if one of these £25 Notes has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink. The names have been picked out at random from Directories and other sources, so it is just possible notes have been awarded to people who are not readers of this paper. No note will be given unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to apply also, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 22 Distribution must reach us by Saturday, December 31st, addressed to THE "NOTE" EDITOR, 22 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

In Short Stories this week will be found the names of those who have received £1 each and of those who would have received £1 had they applied. Are you one of the latter?

He gave her a box of chocolates;
"Sweets to the sweet," he said.
She ate up the stuff, and her people
Were compelled to put her to bed.
He came once again, foolish fellow,
But she said, as she sent him away:
"Your 'sweets to the sweet'
Were for cheap folks to eat—
Good day!"

CAUTION!—Wives, if you want to draw your husbands nearer to you at Christmas time, don't buy them cigars, for nine chances out of ten you'll buy the kind that won't draw.

SHE: "Before we are married and it is for ever too late, confess to me whether there is anything in your past life that you think I might not approve of."
He (trembling): "Well, if you must know all, I kept a diary for nearly three weeks once."

PROFESSOR: "To prove that the ears of the grasshoppers are in their legs, a very simple experiment will suffice. Place one on the table and knock on the table; he will jump off. Now cut off his legs and repeat the experiment, and you will find that he will not jump.—Q. E. D."

"I TELL you we've got the finest tyre-mender you ever saw."

"Indeed."
"Yes. One of our patrons had a sample of it in his pocket at Omdurman. Bullets went clean through him. He just whipped out that tyre tape, clapped on a bit front and back, and calmly went on fighting. But that ain't the worst of it."

"Not."
"No. The wound healed up so perfectly that now he can't get a pension."

CUTLIFE BYNE
WRITER FOR
Short Stories.

UNLESS.

By Imogen.

COY BOOTHBY
WRITER FOR
M. A. P.

A MAN, and a woman.

So it has been, so it will be, to the end of time.

They were sitting together, in a cosy nook in the conservatory, against a background of tender green fern, and dead white azaleas.

The lights from iridescent jewelled lamps flickered softly down upon her, netted themselves in the coils of her tawny hair, chased one another "will o' the wisp" like, across her shemmy gown, caught at the opals that clung to the warm white curve of her throat, and quickened them into flame.

The man at her side, told himself that she was beautiful—never more beautiful than to-night; she loved him, too—this woman, with the mystical eyes—the passionate lips—loved him—and he knew it—had known it for some time.

But the pity of it was, he did not love her. Why, he could not have told you; since there were a hundred reasons why he should; none why he should not. Yet he did not.

Possibly he did not wholly understand her, there were depths in her nature which he could not fathom; heights to which he could not soar. She was too intense, too tragic, to be altogether comfortable as a wife—the sort of woman who would love strongly—hate strongly—it may be sin strongly—suffer strongly, and die. . . . silently.

But just for to-night, she seemed to him wholly a thing of desire; his heart beat, his pulse thrilled in a new and quite unexpected fashion.

She looked up suddenly, mesmerised by the intensity of his gaze.

Then she laughed to cover a touch of embarrassment.

"Do you like it?" she asked, and touched her filmy draperies lightly, with her plumed fan. "It is Worth's latest creation."

"It seems somehow, a part of you, and as such, beyond criticism," the man makes slow answer. "Let me see! what does it suggest? Sea foam? Cirrus clouds? Thistledown? Something ethereally lovely, and essentially perishable."

"You are positively poetical to-night—for you. Here is your reward for a pretty speech."

And drawing out from her bouquet, a deep crimson-hearted bud, she hands it to him with a smile.

Their fingers meet—cling—thrill together. One moment! The next—

Alas! and alas! but beauty is fleeting, and roses frail. A breath—a touch.

Softly, silently, the perfumed petals flutter down, one by one, crimson splashes, on the dead whiteness of her gown.

But the naked stem stayed with her.

Says the woman, with a sharp indrawing of the breath: "It is a bad omen."

But the man laughs, as he takes the leafless stem, from her hand, and pins it in his coat.

"Thus do I defy the omens. And surely, 'ladye fayre,' you who are courageous enough to clasp the ill starred opal to your throat, and twine it in your hair, might be supposed to rise superior to them also."

"October's child is born to woe,
And life's vicissitudes must know.
But bind an opal on her breast
And hope will hush those fears to rest."

"I am an October child. Hence my apparent inconsistency."

"At any rate, they don't seem to have harmed you much, so far," he rejoins, after a short reflective pause.

"Everything that this world can give—youth—beauty—wit—wealth and . . . widowhood!" He finishes with a sharp intonation, bending down to gaze more closely into her eyes. For he knew—no one better—what a pitiless mockery that unsympathetic first marriage of hers had been.

The swift pain, of a bitter recollection, darkens in her eyes. "Everything," she echoes, almost in anger, "everything! What do you—what does anybody know about it?" shredding the crimson petals, as she speaks, with quick restless fingers, "everything! Oh! yes, except just—one—thing," she adds below her breath, as though half unconsciously.

Low as the words are, he has caught them, nevertheless.

"And what is that? Tell me?" he asks her, idly.

"Are you my Father Confessor?" she retorts. "Pray, what should it be? A trinket! The latest thing in pugs! A new gown that shall kindle envy in the breasts of my less fortunate sisters!—Voulo tout!"

And she rises, as she speaks, moving slowly onward; her tall lithe figure undulating, in exquisitely graceful curves; the head carried, with a slightly arrogant backward tilt, on the firm white pillar of throat—a woman with the face of a muse—the mien of an Empress.

"Come! we are hopeless Goths—you and I—we have never put in an appearance in the music room. Suppose we atone for our error now."

He follows, with lary reluctance. It was passing cool and pleasant, in the softly lighted conservatory, and, manlike, he hated a crush.

But, as they pass out he whispers in her ear:

"Some day, I shall come to you to know what that one thing is. And you will tell me?"

"And I shall not tell you."

He laughs—the only laugh of conscious strength, of absolute assurance.

"Oh! yes you will."

But I fancy, somehow, he guessed already with tolerable accuracy, what the one thing was.

Through the open door of the music room, the last strains of the well-known song "Unless" floated out to them with a wild passionate insistence—

Unless you can dream that his faith is fast
Thro' behaving and unbehaving.
Unless you can die, when the dream is past,
Oh, never—never call it loving.

"Do you believe that?" the man asks, in a cynical undertone.

"It would be easy enough to die. It is the living that would be hard." So, looking straight into his eyes, the woman answered him.

And then came an interruption. A lady, good-looking, well dressed, well preserved, came up, smiling, hand outstretched. With her was a very young girl, pretty with the prettiness that nothing but early youth gives: all lilies and roses, with big, wide-open, innocent blue eyes, and quantities of fair fluffy hair, wearing a simple muslin frock with a knot of pink carnations at her belt.

"My dear Mildred!" the elder woman begins effusively, "charmed to meet you again. Let me see! It must be six years since I saw you." "Five," Mrs. Stannus corrects briefly "not that it matters much. Ah, see is it? It was just a few months before—your poor husband died," dropping her voice to the conventional undertone, of polite regret. "And how remarkably well you look! This is Myra, my eldest girl. You recollect Myra, of course, 'the pretty little one' you used to call her."

"Yes, I recollect her—as a child,"—and Mildred Stannus holds out her hand smiling, to the girl, who smiles in response, a little shyly, showing a flash of white teeth, and a dimple.

"It is so stupid here, because you see we are strangers and, of course, there are no introductions. Myra, poor child, is sick of it already. She is positively longing for an ice, but there is nobody to get her one, and I don't quite like—" An interrogative pause, during which she glances from Mildred, to her companion, who is standing close beside, stroking his moustache, and succeeding in looking inexpressibly bored.

Then Mrs. Stannus took the hint, as she was evidently meant to, and introduced him.

"Mr. Cunningham—Mrs. Gordon—Miss Myra Gordon." And then—"Mr. Cunningham you will take Miss Gordon down to get an ice?"

"Oharmed," he murmurs in the stereotyped way, but his eyes belie his speech, for he looks anything but charmed. He dreads bread and butter debütantes; one never knows, quite what to say to them, except pay them silly compliments, which he abhors. Still the girl is pretty, distinctly pretty, and that is some slight compensation after all. At any rate, if he does pay her compliments, he can pay them with a clear conscience.

But he whispers hurriedly to Mildred:

"Where shall I find you again? I may come back may I not?—that is, if you are not absolutely tired of my society?"

"Yes, you may come back," she tells him smiling. "I shall be somewhere about here. Being 'A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,' you will not have much difficulty in locating me."

So he left her.

But he did not return.

When some few hours later, she bade her hostess "good night," and followed the stream of departing guests, homeward bound, she caught a passing glimpse of him coming out of the conservatory, with Myra still on his arm.

Her blue eyes were raised eagerly to his; her fair face flushed and dimpling into smiles; her golden hair brushed his shoulder. And he? He is smiling down at her, as though well pleased.

And, in his coat, where the naked rose stem had been, nestled a pink carnation.

The woman, standing there, in her fleecy white wrap, took it all in, in one quick, comprehensive glance.

Then she drew her lips tight across her teeth, while something, not unlike the ugly demon of jealousy glanced out, for a moment, from those beautiful eyes of hers.

But the next moment she sighed.

"It is the beginning of the end," she murmurs. "I have always felt—always known this must come—some day."

• • • • •

A fortnight later.

Three mirrors, adjusted at cunning angles, flung back to Mrs. Stannus a triple image of herself—full face—profile—three-quarter.

Said Mrs. Stannus to those three

shadow women, from the world of illusion beyond:

"When a woman is ever so little past her *première jeunesse*, she must always dress well, look well; never suffer herself to be surprised in low spirits; or out of sorts; never fret, or worry, never, in any single detail, drop below par." And she smiled bitterly, gazing at her own altered reflection, white, drawn, haggard, with purple hollows, under the tired eyes.

To-night, she had elected to wear black—dead, unrelieved black, high to throat, close fitting to wrist, against which the colourless oval of her face stood out in startling contrast. The only bit of brightness about her was her hair. It glowed, and gleamed in the lamplight, and the opal serpent, coiled just above the low white brow, seemed to leap and quiver like a living thing.

It was all in vain that Fifi, her maid, a quick-eyed, voluble little Parisienne,



"This is Myra, my eldest daughter."

had prayed, protested, almost wept in fruitless endeavours to induce her to alter, or even modify the exceeding severity of her toilette.

"It was so triste so funebre!" she pleaded. "If Madame must wear black to-night, then why not the velvet bodice, square with the diamonds, and a berthe of yellow roses, or a knot of the scarlet geranium—just one small *souçon* of colour anywhere, but Madame is obdurate."

"Not to-night, Fifiue. To-morrow you shall deck me out, as a harlequin, if you will. To-night—I choose to follow my own fancy. No! not any flowers—except . . . Yes, I will wear those white violets . . . Just to please you, Are you satisfied?"

"Mais non," Fifiue replies, with a grimace, a disapproving shrug of her plump shoulders.

And from the mirror in front of them, three plump-shouldered, rosy-cheeked Fifiues, standing close beside their three slim, black, gowned mistresses, grimaced back at her.

A whole fortnight, and she has never once seen him! He had never been quite so long before, without coming.

More than once she had taken up her pen to write to him—to ask him to dinner—anything—anything so that she might see him again.

But pride intervened. "Wait a little," it whispered. "Let him make the advance. He will—he must come . . . soon."

All that day, the feeling—the presentiment of his coming was strong upon her. She would settle down to nothing, starting at each step on the gravel, each ring at the door.

And he *did* come.

That is his voice, in the hall, naming her name—that well-loved voice. . . . Sometimes she feels that, even in her grave, she would quicken at its summons.

He is in the room now—is beside her, with hand outstretched, and the easy, self-assured smile she knows, ah! how well! But when he saw her face, the smile changed to a look of real concern.

"What is it?" he asks anxiously. "Have you been ill or—"

"No, no; not ill—only tired," she interposes hurriedly. "Never mind about me, I am all right. Please tell me of yourself? How have you been? Where have you been? What have you been doing? Why—why have you never been to see me?"

"Must I answer all those questions?" he asks laughing. "Quite well, thank you. Nowhere in particular. Nothing in particular. Circumstances over which I had no control, etc."

She frowned. Something in the answer grated upon her.

Her quick ear detected a false note. But she said nothing directly, and the conversation drifted away into impersonal channels.

A strange, desultory, uncomfortable kind of conversation, with long suggestive pauses—not the eloquent pauses, so frequent between affianced lovers, nor the tranquil assured pauses that fall often, between life-long friends, who understand one another so completely that "Thought can wed with thought," but the breathless stilted pause that comes before the hurricane.

The woman felt it, watching him the while out of those clear eyes of hers—felt it and questioned with herself thus:

"Why is he changed? Where is the difference?—for there is a difference. Is it a woman, I wonder?" She rose and faced the new-born doubt.

"Tell me," she says lightly, though her voice trembled. "What is it? You are holding something back from me to-night. Give me a friend's privilege. Whatever it is, to share it with you."

"What is it you want to know?" the man answers slowly. "If I can, I promise to gratify you."

"Then . . . Has a woman anything to say to it?"

"They usually have to meet things, have they not?"

"That is not answering my question." She is looking straight at him now, and, under her direct gaze, he flushes a little uncomfortably.

"I wish you would be more explicit then," he rejoins, in an irritable tone. "Ask it straight out, for goodness' sake!"

"Are you engaged?" she says slowly. It was a bolt, shot at random, into the blue.

But it struck home.

The man stirred uneasily.

"That is what we call a 'leading question' and as such scarcely fair. Still—I will answer it. No! I am not engaged. . . . actually!"

"Does that mean that you will be?"

"Possibly."

"Why 'possibly'?" she breathes.

"Because . . . I am not sure if she will accept me, and . . . I have not asked her yet. But, I fancy, she understands."

"Who is she? You have not told me."

A pause. Then—"It is Myra—the girl you introduced me to a fortnight ago."



"It was so triste, so funebre," she pleaded.

Ah-h-h! A long drawn, quivering exclamation, then—silence. A long silence, only broken by the dull tick tick of the death beetle in the wainscot. She is leaning back on the low settee, her head resting against the piled up yellow cushions. The light from the shaded lamp falls down upon her face, which is drawn and grey, as though stiffened into stone.

Only the snake above her brow seemed to writhe, and his diamond eyes glittered dangerously.

But the man's face was in shadow.

He rose at length, moving to the piano.

A pile of music flung carelessly about arrests his attention, and he begins turning it hurriedly over with fingers that, in spite of his strong effort at self control, trembled a little. But he only notices one song—Mrs. Browning's "Unless," set to Caracciolo's accompaniment.

He flung it hastily aside. The memories were painful ones.

A light touch on his arm. She is standing beside him.

"Forgive me," she is saying in low, thrilling tones. "I know it is selfish—so selfish of me, but—we have been such very good friends, have we not? you and I, and—and we women find it hard, sometimes, to take kindly to second place. Yet—you will believe me, won't you?—when I say I wish—I wish you every—happiness." Her voice dropped to a scarcely audible whisper; the violets at her belt quivered to her quickened breath.

Moved by some indefinable impulse, he turned and caught both her hands in his. So they stood, these two, gazing miserably into one another's eyes while a man might count a score. To Mildred, it seemed that a curious sense of unreality weighed her down. All around grew vague and remote. She was as a shadow, in a world of shadows. Nothing was real, except the warm, living pressure of his hands on hers.

She sighed softly, drawing her own away at length.

"How silly we are!" she says, with the far off echo of a laugh; "holding hands like a couple of school-children."

"Oh! but I am so tired!—so tired!" passing her hand swiftly across her brow in a dazed, bewildered way. "So tired, and my head aches horribly. Would you—would you think me very rude if I sent you away—now?"

A few moments later, found him crunching the gravel, beneath his feet in a spirit of fierce dissatisfaction with himself—with her—with everybody. Why had she looked at him like that? It was not fair. It was not kind. No man could stand it.

He held in his hand a bunch of white violets, and stared at them stupidly.

How had they come there? They were *her* violets. He had noticed them in her dress. Had she given them to him? Had he plucked them from her belt? Had he picked them up from the floor? For the life of him, he could not remember. Yet there they were.

Well! it was all ended now. Better so. It must have come sooner or later, since he was quite sure—yes, quite sure—he did not love her, and he did—he supposed he really *did*—love Myra.

Still it had been hard; he had not realised that it would be so hard. It was her eyes—the expression in her eyes—that had somehow upset him.

And now that it was done . . . well! he supposed he ought to feel glad of it. One must be cruel sometimes, in order to be kind.

But he did not feel glad, all the same. It had given him a twist somewhere. It would have been pleasanter to keep friends, to be able to see her, sometimes. So thought the man, with a little pity for her, a great deal of regret for himself.

But the woman stood there, as he left her—motionless—her head leaning upon her palm. . . . It seemed a long time . . . Then, the little ormolu clock, on the mantelpiece, chimed the hour.

And she smiled—such an odd, cold little smile.

"Twenty-eight! I am twenty-eight now—nearly twenty-nine," she kept saying to herself. "Twenty-nine! I might live to be seventy, I suppose. People do, sometimes, you know, live to be old, and grey, and past desire, not that that matters much now."

"Forty-one more years, and every year has 365 days, every day twenty-four hours. How endless it all seems! Fancy, going about as usual, eating, talking, sleeping, dreaming! Oh! that would be the worst of all. To wake and find it was only a dream! And all the while to carry a dead heart about with you. How cold it would be—how cold it is . . . now."

"And yet people talk of forgetting. Just as if it were possible. Could I bear it? Is it worth while trying to bear it? Is it—worth—while?" With a slow, uncertain, awaying motion, she groped her way to the French window—opened it—stepped out, on to the lawn.

And the shadows crouching low in ambush, leapt forward, and clutched her, as she stood—a marble woman, framed in by blackness.

The night is suffocatingly hot; a moonless, starless, July night.

To right, and to left of her, long rows of perfumed white lilies are stretching themselves up, on their long stalks, in wordless appeal for air—for water.

A white mist rose up, from the ground—a mist of intense heat, close clinging, like a shroud.

And the woman shivered. "Let me go in again," she whispered, to the shadows.

As she entered the softly lighted room, they slunk back, once more into their lurking places.

But one shadow stayed.

Her eye falls on a small crystal heart, engraved with some mystic characters, which she wore suspended to a slender gold chain.

He had brought it back to her, last summer, from his travels, at the time the craze for collecting trinkets, from different parts, was strong upon her, bidding her, keep it, as a charm, against the evil eye.

Except as his gift, there was no special value in the trinket, but since then, it had never left her, day nor night.

Still smiling—smiling slowly—smiling strangely, she detached it; held it for a moment in the hollow of her palm; kissed it—twice.

Then she did a curious thing, kneeling down on the rug, she dashed it against the hearthstone with all her strength—once—twice—thrice—the third time it broke, into two unequal parts.

"Poor heart!" she whispered softly, as she picked up the pieces—wrapped them in paper—put them in an envelope—sealed the envelope, and addressed it to:

A. Cunningham, Esq., B.L.,

9 Inner Temple.

When that was done, she rang the bell.

"Fifiue," as the maid appeared in answer to her summons, "I am very—very tired. I shall go to bed now."

"*Mais oui!* Madame do look tired," the girl answers compassionately. "It will be well that Madame sleep."

"And you need not call me, to-morrow, Fifiue; let me sleep on. If—if I need you I shall ring."

"As Madame wish."

"And oh! Just one thing more! There is a letter on the mantelpiece, addressed to Mr. Cunningham; I want it left, at his rooms—to-morrow—not posted—about twelve o'clock. You understand?"

"Madame may leave it to me."
"Then—I think—that is all. And now," wearily, "I am ready."
But when the maid had left her for the night, Mildred Stannus stood before the mirror, gazing long and silently into its depths.
Her face, with its sharpened outlines, looked wan and grey, the lips strained and drawn.
But the deep, mournful eyes held their secret well.
"Shall I sleep to-night?" she asks, throwing out her arms, in a pitiful appeal to those three unreal women behind the mirror.
And with similar gestures those unreal women answered her again.
She shivered.
For the Shadow had crept very close now.

To Arthur Cunningham, barrister-at-law, it seemed that a troublesome demon of envy had somehow got possession of him that night.
He had smoked a sixth cigarette, in the vain hope that it might tend to restore his equanimity; now he threw it away in disgust and fell to pacing up and down the room in an unquiet, aimless sort of fashion.
He had a curious, indefinable sense of having forfeited in some way—how he scarcely knew—his own self-respect. He did not like the feeling; it troubled him. He was a man who prided himself on being scrupulously true and honourable in his dealings with the opposite sex.

After all, what had he done? Nothing. What had she done? Nothing. She had only looked at him. But a look means a good deal sometimes, and that look of hers, had rent asunder his flimsy fabric of self esteem, and flung the rags at his feet for men to trample on.

Was he to blame for not loving her? He would have loved her—if he could. He had come perilously near to it that evening, in the conservatory.

If he had not met Myra, possibly!—His aimless steps led him to the mantelpiece; on it stood two portraits. He took them up—looked at them—compared them critically. One that of a woman, in clinging Greek draperies; the face, almost in profile; one finely moulded arm upraised in the act of twining a garland round a pillar—a grand imperial, Lucretia Borgia sort of figure; the other, just the head and shoulders of a very young girl, rising out of some filmy whiteness of tulle and lace, a smiling face, with innocent wide opened eyes, and an aureole of fluffy hair.

"Hang it all!" Arthur Cunningham exclaimed, more expressively than elegantly, pushing the two pictures aside with a gesture of impatient anger. "How is a fellow to decide? I am beginning to think there is something to be urged in favour of Mormonism after all. If one could marry two women at the same time, it would be vastly convenient—sometimes."

A faint subtle perfume—the perfume of violets saluted him—her violets! he had pinned them in his coat. Now he unfasted them, fingered them, almost caressingly, with some quick stirrings of regret. The stems were tied with heliotrope baby ribbon. It was characteristic of the woman that she always tied her flowers together with ribbons—an essentially feminine touch, which, while he laughed at her for it, he rather liked, nevertheless.

A thousand little traits of hers came back to him, with the perfume and the ribbons: little gestures—tricks of speech peculiarly her own.

What a strangely contradictory character hers was! a combination of masculine breadth of vision, with an inconsistency purely feminine; of depth and superficiality; sense and frivolity.

She possessed too, in a quite remarkable degree, the gift of sympathetic silence; she understood him, as no other woman did—his varying moods—his hopes—his aspirations—his not unfrequent fits of depression.

And he had lost her. Of his own free will, he had cast her off—for another. Why had he done it? Had he been mad to do it, after all? He sighed, as he lifted the violets to his lips "Poor violets! you shall not die, if I can help it—at least not yet!"

Then he untied the ribbon, smoothing it out, with almost a woman's touch; placed the violets in a tumbler, on the mantelpiece; took up her photo, and looped the ribbon in and out through the wrought filigree frame. Just then, the clock close at hand chimed out "Two."

Then a strange thing happened.

It seemed to him that invisible fingers—a woman's fingers, soft and clinging, were closing round his, in a clasp at once firm and gentle, thrilling him with the subtle electric thrill of sympathetic contact. The room grew suddenly, strangely cold, as though an icy wind had swept it through and through. So vivid, so intensely real was the sensation, that he started back with a strong shudder—was it awe, or fear?—and the picture, her picture, fell face downwards on the floor with a crash of shattered glass. And with its fall, the strange mesmeric influence which had swept across him, for a moment passed utterly away.

He laughed a queer nervous laugh, as he stooped to pick up the fragments.

"What a 'duffer' I am, and yet—such a queer unaccountable sensation it has never been my lot to feel before! If I were a superstitious fool—which, thank goodness, I am not—I should say a Presence had been in the room; 'pon my soul, it felt uncommonly like it. Fact of the matter is, I am altogether upset. To-day's interview, combined with over-smoking and want of sleep, has played the dickens with even my iron nerves; unless I go to bed, I shall fancy myself seeing 'spooks' and spirits presently."

At the door he paused a moment—his lighted candle in his hand. Translated into words, his thoughts ran somewhat as follows:

"After all, I think—I will go and see her to-morrow. Yes! I must see her! And if she looks at me—as she looked to-night—well, I'll tell her I love her better than Myra—since—I verily believe I do. At least, I know I cannot afford to lose her, out of my life—as I should if—"

"And Myra? Yes! I could stand her loss better. True! she caught my fancy. She is pretty—very pretty, and that childlike, appealing way she has is very fetching—sometimes."

"But then Mildred is beautiful. And I love her. Yes! I am sure I do. Strange that it should have come to me in a flash of revelation—after so long. But thank God! it is not yet too late."

"To-morrow—to-morrow, I will go to her. I will take her in my arms and ask her to forgive me for the pain I have caused her."

"And she will forgive me; she will smile at me again, in the old sweet way—*Ma belle dame, mais non pas sans merci.*"

"My mistress is not up yet, Sir," is the answer of the solemn butler to the inquiry of Arthur Cunningham.

"Ah! in a tone of disappointment. "She is not generally so late is she? It is twelve o'clock and—"

"No, sir, but last night she gave orders no one was to disturb her until she rang, and she has not rung yet."

Arthur Cunningham was turning reluctantly away, when he caught a glimpse of Fifi, crossing the hall.

He called her, stepping in as he did so.

"Do you think Mrs. Stannus would be ready to see me in—say half-an-hour, or an hour if—I called back?"

"Fraident! that I cannot tell to Monsieur. But I think 'Madame' have not yet wake up. She did leave orders with me, not to let her be disturbed. But now I think of it, she did leave a letter to give Monsieur, this morning. It was to be sent to Monsieur's rooms."

He took the letter in some surprise. It felt hard. What was in it? Why had she written to him? Was it a reproach? Well! he would not open it now. Better wait to see her first. Then—they would open it together, when the smile had come back to her lips—the light to her eyes.

"I wish you would tell her I am here and ask her when she will see me," he persists somewhat unreasonably. "At least, see if she is awake."

"But, Madame!—it may be displeasing to her, when she have given me her commands."

"Never mind. Do as I tell you. I will take the responsibility."

And Fifi departs, with a shrug of her shapely shoulders.

"Why should Monsieur be so impatient to see Madame? Did he not see her last night? But perhaps they have quarrelled, and that is why Madame look so white and sad. And now Monsieur have come to make it up with her. So perhaps Madame will not mind so much being disturbed."

And meanwhile he waits in ill-concealed impatience counting the moments, until the maid returns: he feels absurdly, quite boyishly light-hearted this morning. Will Fifi come back soon?

What message will she bring?

Suppose—suppose she were to refuse him—after all! A chill sense of misgiving is borne in upon him for moment. But no! That is impossible. She loves him—oh! yes, she loves him. Has he not always known it, always felt sure of it—too sure to doubt it now. And yet will that wretched girl never come? What can be keeping her! It seems an hour. Ah! here she is at last.

"Well?" he asks moving forward impatiently to meet her.

"I have call her two—three times, as Monsieur have demand of me, but she do not answer. She sleep very sound. It is strange since Madame always sleep light. It is perhaps that Madame take—I know not how you call it—something for to make sleep; she have not sleep well, it is now a fortnight and—"

He stops her with a gesture. A spasm of horrible fear—all the more horrible because formless, grips at his heart, paralyzing its beats for a moment—the next, he seizes the maid by the shoulder, almost roughly.

"Quick go to her—wake her at once—do you hear me? Don't stand gaping like an idiot, girl! do as I tell you," for Fifi is staring at him with round eyes of amazement, at his pallid face, his twitching lips.

"*Mais oui!* I go, but Monsieur need not be so hasty," is the pettish rejoinder, "there is nothing so much to be alarm for; I go—*moi*—and, if Madame is angry it shall be Monsieur who will take blame."

And with a saucy toss of the head she makes her way once more upstairs.

But this time he follows her.

He waits at the half-opened bed-room door, while Fifi goes in, rubbing her shoulder with an injured air.

He hears her call "Madame! Madame!" first softly, then louder, then: "Ah! *Mon Dieu!* What shall I do? She do not wake!"

He waits to hear no more. One quick step. He is in the room—is at the bedside now. He can see the white face, in profile, on the white pillow—the long heavy lashes, lying against her cheek in a fringe of intense blackness—the rich bright hair, rippling loose over the coverlet.

And she smiles, in her sleep, as though her dreams are pleasant ones.



Too late! Too late!

"Mildred!" he cries, in anguish, "Mildred! Mildred! Oh my love! my love! awake!"

But there was no voice, nor any that answered.

Too late! Too late!

That love which was her life, that love which might have summoned her back from the very grave's brink, the love she had sighed for, wept for—*died for*—is here now, and she knows not of it.

For Mildred Stannus had passed away into the silent land, and the gates of this world are closed upon her, for ever.

That night, in the solitude of his own room, Arthur Cunningham held, in his hand, her letter.

He had altered terribly in those few hours, his face is grey and drawn, scored with deep lines of anguish, the face of a stricken man.

What did that letter contain? Oh, Heaven! What might it not contain! And he shrank before it.

But it must be faced; if only that this haunting horror, this hideous formless spectre of doubt, may be strangled into silence.

He broke the seal.

Inside is a small packet. Something wrapped up in delicately tinted paper, such as she always used.

He opens it, the sheet is blank. It slips from his shaking fingers. Then the two halves of the sundered crystal heart fall out, and drop gently to the ground.

And Arthur Cunningham covers his face, with a great and exceeding bitter cry.

VICTIMS OF THE FUNNY FIEND.

AND HOW THE FUNNY FIEND HIMSELF IS
SOMETIMES BURNED.

"It would no doubt surprise you not a little to learn exactly how many people are annually victimised by the witty swindler," recently said a high authority at Scotland Yard to P.W.

"A very big percentage indeed of the cases with which we have to deal are exceedingly ludicrous to all concerned, if one excepts, perhaps, the unfortunate plaintiff. Christmas time is especially fruitful in jocular situations. Whether it be that the season temporarily banishes suspicion from men's minds, or whether the influx into the Metropolis of unsophisticated country visitors makes his task comparatively simpler, the fact remains that at no time of the year is the funny fiend more in evidence.

"It is of course superfluous to say that there is a very wide line to be drawn between the two classes of wits whose little jokes are played at the expense of their fellow men. There are the swindlers pure and simple, whose sole object is to replenish their exchequer, and there are also the comparatively harmless lunatics, whose only aim is to take a rise out of friend or enemy, as the case may be. Notwithstanding their comparative guilelessness, however, the latter class of jokers not infrequently figure in the police court as the outcome of their little escapades, and probably there are few more effective cures for practical joking than a winter's night spent in a suburban police cell.

"A typical Christmas swindle came to hand only last week, among several others of the same order. An advertisement was widely inserted in the provincial press to the following effect:

"WHAT EVERY YOUNG WIFE SHOULD KNOW!—On receipt of a stamped addressed envelope and P.O. for 1s., advertiser will forward, carefully sealed from observation, full particulars of a certain way of insuring your own and your husband's happiness throughout your married life. —Address—, Dr., —, &c.

"Several hundreds of young ladies appear to have forwarded their shillings in reply to this beautifully vague advertisement. Most of them, however, lacked the pluck of the young bride-elect, who, with cheeks aflame with indignation, and in sentences which were thickly punctuated with snorts of righteous wrath, explained that the only return for her shilling had been a sheet of printed paper containing a receipt for making a Xmas pudding!

"A far more cruel and somewhat more apparent hoax occurred at Liverpool a few years back. In this case an advertisement was inserted in all the local papers, offering employment to five hundred working men, who were required to level the grounds of a forthcoming Exhibition.

"Each man was to bring his own pick and spade and the candidates would be selected after eleven o'clock in the forenoon in the order in which they succeeded in arriving at the company's offices. Needless to say, it being winter time and the local navvies mostly out of work, a vast army of would-be workers assembled only to find that they had been victimised by some thoughtless-minded individual who doubtless enjoyed the 'fun' all the more because he was never identified.

"A well-known Society lady, whose husband was recently dispatched upon a political mission to Burmah, was thrown into a state of serious prostration on receiving a letter purporting to come from a member of his suite. This letter related how the whole party, with the exception of the writer, had been killed by Dacoits, who, seizing upon her husband as the leader, had burnt him to death over a slow fire. 'Happily,' concluded this remarkable epistle, 'I was enabled to save a few of his ashes, which I forward herewith.' The ashes, it may be added, were inclosed in a sealed glass bottle, and might have so remained to the present day had it not been for the untimely arrival of an epistle from the supposed corpse.

"Somehow or other the greatest hoaxes have invariably gone hand-in-hand with the greed for gain. Time after time have disappointed home-coming miners maliciously dropped hints of the great wealth they have been forced to leave behind for want of funds; and just

as often have their empty workings been flooded by eager crowds of gold seekers who only discover their mistakes when it is too late to turn back. Of these mad gold hunts, the most famous was the Rocky Bell Camp rush of 1878. This ruined thousands of miners who had tramped endless miles through snow and frost only to find that the sole vein of gold lay in one small claim, which was already staked out.

"Occasionally, however, it is satisfactory to note, the bitter is himself bitten. A Stockport detective recently brought to justice a facetious young gentleman who had communicated a piece of unjustifiable scandal about a local celebrity to a certain great Manchester daily. The method by which the culprit was traced was a study worthy of Sherlock Holmes. Having obtained access to the original manuscript, which of course bore a false name and address, the officer was considerably saddened to find at the outset that this sole clue was in the form of a few typewritten lines upon a half sheet of note-paper. Careful thought, however, soon gave birth to a practical idea which he was not long in putting into execution.

"His first step was to visit all the local stationers with the idea of identifying the note-paper. He was, however, only partially successful. He certainly discovered the firm which sold it, but he also discovered that at least five hundred of their regular customers used this same paper. Second thoughts, however, soon



"What machine do you ride, Susie?"
"The easiest running and best on earth."
"In that case you must have a collection of all the leading makes."

M. B. BERNARD QUARITCH, of Piccadilly, London, is the greatest authority on the value of old and rare books. He is of German parentage, but came to this country more than fifty years ago, and, with the exception of a short stay in Paris, has resided here ever since.

THE income of Sir Edward Clarke, the celebrated Q.C., exceeds £20,000 per annum. On more than one occasion, when he has had a "good week," his fees have run into thousands. At one time he used to write leading articles for a London daily.

LADY MARCUS BERESFORD has about 150 pet cats, which she has trained to use their intelligence in a remarkable manner. At intervals she holds a reception of her pets; she sits in a chair, and they form a half circle in front of her, each coming forward for a pat when it hears its name.

LORD EDWARD CECIL,

son of the Prime Minister, designed the yellow ribbon with the blue band in the centre which is worn with the Khartoum medal. It is intended to represent the yellow desert with the blue Nile running through it.

THE Dowager Empress of Russia takes great interest in dairy farming. She established a dairy farm at Pavlovsk, and invited all those who thought of starting such farms to come and have luncheon there. But the visitors were enjoined not to walk on the grass, as that would hurt her as much as if they walked upon her.

THE statement that Rudyard Kipling had received a shilling a word for a story in PEARSON'S MAGAZINE induced a wag to write to him and inclose a shilling postal order. "Hearing that wisdom was being retailed at a shilling a word," wrote the joker, "I inclose a shilling for a sample." Kipling kept the order and sent back the word "Thanks."

M. HANOTAUX, the French statesman, was, only a few years ago, a lecturer on history at the Sorbonne, Paris, at a salary of £6 a month. He used to work also in the Archives department of the French Foreign Office, and write for a Paris journal. He received a helping hand from Jules Ferry, and this assistance, combined with his own talents, enabled him to rise very rapidly. He was one of the best Foreign Ministers France has ever had.

MR. JUSTICE DAY has the reputation of being a severe judge, but his sense of fair play is very strong and has led him to adopt a practice which at first created some surprise. When on circuit he almost invariably postpones sentence until the last day of the assizes. His object is now known; if the jury have to decide a similar case later in the course of the assizes, they shall not be influenced in their decision by the sentence passed in a previous case.

led him to start at the other end of his clue—who made the typewriter?

"It may not be generally known that most typewriter firms have their own peculiar type, which can be recognised by an expert at a glance. From this fact he was speedily enabled to trace the type of machine employed by the joker. There, however, he stuck for a long time.

"Eventually he had a special stroke of luck. Calling in one morning at the typewriter company's depot, he overheard a local merchant requesting the attendance of a mechanic at his office in order to repair a slight defect in the lettering of his own machine. This, his clerk complained, was so much bent that the E (the letter most frequently used in the alphabet) persistently struck too much upon its left side. In a moment the detective saw that Providence had played right into his hands; for the manuscript sent to the Manchester daily had possessed exactly the same characteristic in its E's that the worthy merchant was now complaining of. A few days later the merchant's clerk had the pleasure of paying up very handsomely for his little fummess; but the exact method by which his detection was brought about is still a cause of great wonderment to him."

DO YOU SNAP-SHOT?

THERE are plenty of readers who, during the past summer, have been wandering about the country taking photographs of curiosities—natural and artificial. The editor of P.W. is in want of a number of these, and will pay a guinea each for the best five, which will become his property. If there are other photographs of sufficient interest to justify their publication, these will be paid for. A description giving, where possible, full names of persons and places dealt with, should accompany each photograph. The competition will remain open until the end of January, 1899. Mark your envelope "Photo" in the top left hand corner.

AN ANSWER.

By COSMO HAMILTON.

He threw his knife and fork down, kicked his chair away, and strode across to the fire.

Never was dinner allowed to pass without her leaving the table and rushing up to see if the boy was all right—the boy!

It was always the boy, waking and sleeping. First thing in the morning—the boy. Had he slept well? Had nurse given him his breakfast? At breakfast he must sit at table, and be watched and spoken to—spoken about. After breakfast he must be bathed, and talked to, and hushed off to sleep. Doors mustn't be banged—*sssssh!*—the boy!

Lunch—and the boy. Petted, fed, nursed. In the afternoon hushed off to sleep in the nursery. Before dinner, undressed, bathed, and put to bed. At dinner, talked about, visited with flying tip-toe visits. After dinner, sat by in case he should wake. Even at night, dreamed of, spoken to in sleep.

Where did he come in? Husband, bread-winner, lover. He might as well never have been married. She wanted nothing else till the boy came. Would receive his kisses, kiss him, give him her love and tenderness, sympathy and companionship. He never saw her now.

Bond? How? The boy divided them more effectually than the sea the land. Made two of them. Better if the boy had been born dead than live and destroy the happiness of a man who was jealous of his wife's every movement, every breath, every glance. A man who expanded and became radiant, gleesome, whole in her presence—she, who blessed the air he breathed, gilded every brain-wave, harmonised each heart-beat. A man who closed up, became bitter, savage, sick, in her absence.

There was no more holding of hands, long rambles through the sun-touched lanes. No more sorrow when he went, joy when he returned. The boy had absorbed her. The world was the boy; the boy the world.

A gift from God, a blessing, a tie!—a living irony, a devil's trick to cheat him of his love, a will-o'-the-wisp to lure her love away.

Something must happen. Something must be made to happen. Love shan't be sacrificed at the altar of self-indulgence. Because that's all it was on his side—pride on hers. Pride for something that was her own. The boy must not live. The boy must be made not to live. She would suffer. But what was her longing for the dead compared to his longing for the living—the living, who was his life? But he would be all to her again; he would be so tender, so respectful; she should never regret. After all, he was her husband. She swore to love day and night, year in, year out.

It would be easy, because it would be right. Because it had to be. A pillow held over his mouth in the dark. After all it might have died at birth. A few months didn't count. It was her fault. She didn't swear to love him till a child came. He should be first—husband, bread-winner, lover.

Would a pillow do? The boy might cry. She might hear or see. Then everything would end. Oh, why was the boy sent when happiness was complete? . . . A little courage, a firm hand, and her whole presence, all her love again.

But brandy. It would dull the sense of wrong that stuck, for all the averted head. That's the worst of God—conscience, that immovable, all-convincing thing. Know a thing to be wrong, have God's word for it—without asking—argue, unconvince the all-convincing, act, and suffer all the days of one's life. But this was different. Here were two who had been heaven and earth, the present, the future, the life, breath, music of each other. Completeness because of it. Content and completeness. Then the boy.

But . . . brandy. If it was wrong, then the world was wrong, life was wrong, God was wrong.

She must be got down. He would take her place while she finished her dinner. Nurse should be sent away. It would be an accident. The pillow would have slipped while the boy slept. But he would be dead; he would have died to give life.

But . . . brandy.

The man clenched his hands, closed his ears, and opened the door. The wife fell into his arms.
"The boy!" . . . (Oh God, how cruel.)
"The boy!" . . . (Oh God, how kind.)

He: "What's the matter with these cigars?"
She: "Why, dear, they smelt so horrid that I put some eau-de-Cologne on them!"

MAUDE: "Aunt Mary has a look of Lord Nelson's hair. It has been in our family nearly a century."
CLARA: "Indeed, I wasn't aware that one of your ancestors was a barber."

"The loveliest man in the world is going to visit me this Christmas. He's absolutely colour-blind."
"Is that why he is so lovely?"
"To be sure. Just think of it; he cannot tell the difference between holly and mistletoe berries, and—the house is full of holly."

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THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS says: "How many of us wish that when we were boys we had been thrown among one hundred books of this kind! We might have read only fifty of them, but what a delight those fifty would have been! Even to-day one thinks with pleasure of the many households throughout England which will, within a year or so, contain a certain number of books that it is always a joy to pick up."

A MEMBER OF THE QUEEN'S HOUSEHOLD, who wishes to remain anonymous, writes: "I consider your scheme to be the most important and far-reaching literary enterprise ever undertaken in this country."

A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT writes: "In the years to come the young man of to-day will be writing his autobiography, and he will look backward and say: 'I made success, I made fortune, I made fame, because I bought and read your hundred best books.'"

GROWLS.

Under this heading complaints which readers care to make on every conceivable subject will be dealt with, provided they are of sufficient general interest. A gold-plated pencil-case will be presented to those whose letters are utilized. Communications should be addressed to the Editor in envelopes marked "Growl."

F. J. W. writes: "Why is it that such a large percentage of our public buildings, especially places of worship, are so badly ventilated; either insufficiently supplied with fresh air, or else supplied with too much of it in the shape of draughts, which give people so many colds and sore throats. I know a man who states that he regularly had quinsy for years, till his medical man advised him not to go to the place of worship he usually attended. He took the doctor's advice, and has been free from the complaint ever since. But why should people have to resort to such an unpleasant abstention?"—Why?

J. T. M. feels discontented with the present arrangements in force for rewarding the bravery of soldiers. He says that the V.C. is all right in its way, and much appreciated by the private who gets it, but the recognition he receives is not commensurate with that received by an officer who performs an act of equal daring. The officer will probably be promoted, and this means a substantial increase of income. J. T. M. suggests that the private who distinguishes himself in the field should have a commission given to him. He says: "Give Tommy Atkins the promotion he deserves, and you will not find so many old soldiers seeking admission to the workhouse."—In this I do not agree with my correspondent, although his views may have hitherto been shared by many other readers. The average private does not want a commission. He is quite content if he ultimately reaches the position of colour-sergeant of his company. You must understand there is a wide gulf between the social status of the private and the officer—a gulf which cannot be bridged. If a man after serving in the ranks of the regular Army is presented with a commission, it is practically impossible for him, unless he has received a college education, to take his place at the officers' mess without keenly feeling his position as a social intruder. He will be cut by his brother officers, snubbed on every occasion, and his life will be made a burden to him. In fact, he would be only too glad to return to his comrades in the ranks. It is passing strange that although money will secure for an erstwhile poor man the good fellowship of his late superiors, sheer pluck and physical bravery do not raise him one inch in the social scale.

FOOTMAN considers it very unfair that in all novels where men-servants are mentioned they are depicted as ignorant persons who always sound their h's in the wrong place and talk like East-end costermongers (although to talk like an East-end costermonger is no sin—except sometimes). He says: "I should like to know what gentleman would engage me if I were unable to speak to him politely. For my part, I should think that good servants ought to be able to talk properly always, in view of the fact that they are continually hearing the gentry talk."—This is exactly where the trouble comes in, for many men-servants try to affect the correct method of speech adopted by their employers, and fail horribly. There are, however, unquestionably, many men-servants whose conversation is as nearly correct as possible. At the same time, there is no smoke without flame, and very good grounds exist for the exaggerated talk of the badly-spoken butler or footman of whom one reads in romance.

E. C. protests against that hardy annual—the "carol singer." He points out that not one alleged songster in fifty enjoys anything but the most miserable apology for a voice. He lives in a suburb of London, and from the middle of November until the time of his writing six nights a week the air outside his particular domain has been rent with the most unearthly howls and shrieks, bearing no resemblance whatever to music. In conclusion he says: "I do not wish to deprive children and others of the pleasure of singing, but let them sing at home; and then, if the cat dies—well, so much the worse for the cat-meat man."—It is certainly frightfully annoying to be bothered by children who believe that they are singing carols outside your house, and I verily think strong parental supervision should be exercised to prevent them from carrying out their ideas of how Yule-tide should be celebrated in the musical line. I have nothing whatever to say against properly organized bands of carol singers; in fact, it is quite pleasant to hear a carol well sung; and wait, too, I can tolerate if the instruments are properly in tune. The whole trouble in the latter case lies in the time of night selected. Nine o'clock should be absolutely the latest hour at which they ought to appear in the street. After this time they disturb babies and editors and other animals who want to sleep.

An Achievement.

"Did you try that composition of mine?" asked the young man who composes alleged classical music.
"Yes," replied the young woman.
"Did you like it?"
"Ever so much. It's the first time I could get father to take any interest in our music."
"What did he say?"
"He said he believed we girls were right after all in saying that old piano of ours had outlived its usefulness, and that we might get a new one next week."

He had been to the Pantomime.

A MAN in Glasgow was found lying asleep late at night near a surgical appliance stores, and when he was roused up by a passerby, it was seen that he had been indulging too freely in intoxicants.
He looked about in a bewildered way, and then as he caught sight of the artificial limbs exposed in a glass case, which was brightly lighted up for advertisement purposes, he exclaimed:
"It's nae sae late as I thocht it wis, for I see the ballet lasses are aye gaun on wi' their performance."

Rough on the Convicts.

THE Russian convict has a very hard time indeed, to judge by the description of the passengers on board the Imperial steamer *Yaroslav*, which sailed a few weeks ago from Odessa. The passengers, three hundred in number, were all murderers, and each one was chained by the ankle, waist, and wrist.
The possibility of a revolt during the long voyage to Saghallen is carefully guarded against, and even the hardest of the convicts must have felt his heart sink, when upon coming on board the *Yaroslav*, he saw the preparations which had been made for his reception.
The convicts, already heavily fettered, were turned into iron cages, resembling those seen in a menagerie. In front of the cages, and running along their entire length, was a steam-pipe, connected with the ship's boilers, and furnished every few yards with turncock and hose. Should any serious insubordination occur the guards would simply turn on the steam, and the prisoners, if they did not at once submit, would be scalded to death.

And Coal is so Costly, too!

It was Christmas Eve.
The children's stockings were being filled, and the parents were moving about and enjoying the work as only parents can.
The eldest boy had ceased to believe in Santa Claus, so he was deputed to help in the ceremonies.
He had left the room for a few minutes, and now he came back, bearing in his hand four small packages bound in brown paper.
Each of these he placed in a stocking with four loud chuckles.
His parents smiled, too, for they were pleased to see him so thoughtful.
"What were your gifts, my son?" asked his father, while his mother looked proud.
"Oh, such a lark!" he ejaculated. "Won't they just open their eyes ter-morrer! I played a trick on each of 'em with a lump of coal, and—"
But the startled parents waited to hear no more. The mother fainted, and the father rushed to the stockings and drew out the packages.
"Would you ruin us, boy?" he thundered.
Grasping the priceless pieces in his palpitating hand, he returned them to the cellar, and the blubbing boy brought his mother to.

HE paid her a thousand cold sovereigns
For damages done to her heart,
And with it she and her true lover
Were able to get quite a start.

JUDGE: "You are accused of stealing six reams of paper, three gallons of ink, and five gross of pens. What have you to say?"
PRISONER: "Your honour, I am a novelist, and I was merely collecting material for a new story."

THE ENTIRE ARSENAL.—She looked up at him over the rims of her heavy-bowed spectacles.
"This suggestion of the Russian Tsar's seems like a good idea, Richard," she said in her deep alto voice.
"Yes, Maria, it is—I mean it does."
"As I understand it," she went on, without heeding his remark, "he wants us to lay down the sword, and the musket, and the cannon, and, and—"
"The rolling-pin, the broom, and the flat-iron," he put in with a hard, dry chuckle.
"Richard!"
She glared at him fiercely for a moment, and then resumed her reading.

HER NAME.

Oh, no, I never breathe her name,
For sacred 'tis to me;
My bounding pulse I strive to tame
When that dear name I see.
For me 'tis full of music grand
And aspirations high,
For she's the Chinese Empress, and
Her name is Tzu-hai-tuan-yu-Kang-i-shao-yu-chang - cheng - shou - kung-chin - hysten-chang-ai!

SOMETHING LEFT TO DO.—Tommy: "Come on out and play."
Eddy: "I can't."
Tommy: "Why not?"
Eddy: "I got some Christmas things wot I ain't broke yet."

"I SUPPOSE," said the admiring friend, "that you gave a great deal of thought to that big case you just won?"
"No," answered the lawyer, "I never gave a bit of thought to it. But," he added reflectively, "I sold a lot."

HOLIDAY TRAVELLERS! SIGN THIS COUPON.

"PEARSON'S WEEKLY" INSURANCE COUPON.

The signing of this coupon by the purchaser will be sufficient to entitle him or her next-of-kin or legal representative to the benefit of the £1,000 Railway Insurance and the Football and Cycling Insurance, provided the conditions of the insurance coupon have been fulfilled.

Signature.....

Available from 5 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 31st, 1898, until midnight, Saturday, Dec. 31st, 1898. For full particulars see below.

474 INSURANCE CLAIMS HAVE BEEN PAID

(including one of a Thousand Pounds.)

This Insurance holds good for any number of claims to the extent of £1000—not for one only.

£1000 Specially Guaranteed

OCEAN ACCIDENT AND GUARANTEE CORPORATION LIMITED.

40, 42, and 44, MOORGATE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

(To whom Notice of Claims, under the following conditions, must be sent within seven days to the above address.)

INSURANCE TICKET, applicable to passenger trains in Great Britain and Ireland.

Issued under Section 23 of the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Company, Limited, Act, 1887.

ONE THOUSAND POUNDS

will be paid by the above Corporation to the legal representative of any person killed by an accident to the train in which the deceased was an ordinary ticket-bearing passenger (including holders of season and excursion tickets, and post-office officials in any of the railway sorting vans, and railway servants travelling with pass or railway servants' tickets in an ordinary carriage), and who, at the time of such accident, had in his, or her, possession, the Insurance Coupon above, or the paper in which it is, with his, or her, usual signature, written in ink or pencil on the space provided at the foot. This paper may be left at his, or her, place of abode, so long as the coupon is signed.

PROVIDED ALSO, that the said sum will be paid to the legal representative of such person injured should death result from such accident within three calendar months thereafter, and that notice of the accident be given within three days of its occurrence.

One Hundred Pounds will be paid to whomsoever the Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* may decide to be next-of-kin of any cyclist or football player who meets his death by an accident while actually riding a cycle or playing football, provided that deceased at the time of such accident, had in his, or her, possession, the Insurance Coupon to be found above, or the paper in which it is, with his, or her, usual signature, written in ink or pencil on the space provided at the foot, and that death occurred within twenty-four hours thereafter, and that notice was given of such accident to the said Corporation at above address, within three days of its occurrence.

The above conditions are the essence of the contract. This Insurance holds good for the current week of issue only, and entitles the holder to the benefit of, and is subject to, the conditions of the "Ocean Accident and Guarantee Company, Limited, Act," 1887, Rules No. 2 and 3.

The Purchase of this publication is admitted to be the payment of a Premium under Sec. 24 of the Act. A Print of the Act can be seen at the office of this Journal, or of the said Corporation. No person can recover on more than one Coupon Ticket of this paper in respect of the same risk.

It is hereby notified that the premium in respect of PEARSON'S WEEKLY RAILWAY INSURANCE and also of the FOOTBALL and CYCLING INSURANCE, has been paid up to December 31st, 1898, and that therefore every purchaser of PEARSON'S WEEKLY is insured with this Company against Fatal Railway Accidents to the extent of ONE THOUSAND POUNDS, and against Fatal Cycling and Football Accidents, under the conditions named in the notice above.

General Manager for the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation Ltd.

Rich. S. Faull

COLD STEEL.

By M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "Prince Zaleski," "Empress of the Earth," etc.

CHAPTER I. THE FORDS.

THE historians have not always recorded the most interesting, or the most important, facts of history: they tell us of the Battle of the Spurs, but not of the incidents of Luther's youth; of the Edict of Nantes, but not of the case of Bessie Ford.

Yet these unrecorded were more interesting, and important, than these recorded events.

As for Bessie Ford, she was like a pebble dropped into water, round which float out and widen slow circles: only, in her case, instead of the circles fading as they widened, they still gathered depth and height, they filled a sea, till at the horizon they rolled away in sombre billows, mountain-high.

Bessie Ford lived the most intensive part of her life during the earlier years of that strong English monarch, King Henry VIII.

Let us state at once that the whole motive and main-spring of Bessie Ford's life lay in a Sister, called Laura Ford. We say "called," for it is doubtful if "Ford" could have been the girl's real name. It was more probably Garcia, or Gomez, or Perez.

Bessie was a girl of a humble, though worthy, class, born in Hampshire; and once, when she was four years old, some Spanish noblemen, connected with the Court, came with large retinues on an Autumn visit to my Lord Bishop of Winchester. Now, to the Episcopal Palace Bessie's mother, then a widow, often took eggs and butter to sell.

And so (as we suspect) it came about that, whereas Bessie Ford was a girl of quite plain and homely seeming, her sister Laura, five years younger, was a creature of simply gorgeous loveliness, Spanish in type.

At the age of twenty-one Bessie came to great London to work. It was at the invitation of mine host of The Bell in Eastcheap, who was the uncle of her mother. Laura then was sixteen years, and nearly a head taller than Bessie; she looked in her heeled cordovans like a young birch in Spring, sprung lithe and sprightly from the hillside. And Bessie loved Laura foolishly, and was infinitely proud of Laura, and lived in a constant tremble and trouble of fear for Laura.

Bessie was small and dainty, her hair being nut-brown, and combed flat in two clean low curves over a great broad forehead, arched like a bowl. Below this spacious dome of brow there was a very small triangle of face indeed. Her brown eyes were small, and grave, and down-looking, with very little eye-lash, and set very far apart in the head one from the other.

By her labours at the inn she was able to keep Laura living almost luxuriously in a lodging in the Whitefriars; and since Laura could not, or would not, wholly be made a nun, all Bessie's musings among the gallants at the bar were of the perils, and the abominations, and the tribulations, of Babylon.

There was one name at which, above all other names, she started: it was the name of Henry, the King.

One night she dreamt that the King, passing on horseback through the streets, looked up and saw the face of Laura at her window. And Bessie leapt from sleep with wild eyes, and rushed, crying out, toward the door.

Already the fame of the young King as the dragon-gallant, the Blue Beard of his female subjects, had spread through England.

Bessie, being lately come to Babylon, did not yet fully recognise the difference between its dimensions and those of a country village. It got into her head that the danger of a meeting between Laura and the King was always imminent, just about to culminate; and she divined, with woman's instinctive accuracy, that one glance of those royal eyes at the face she cherished, would be enough to ruin all her hopes in life.

She could not dream that there existed on the earth any beauty comparable to that of her child; and perhaps, in fact, there did not.

King Henry became Bessie Ford's night-mare. He loomed upon her imagination as a vast monster, girl-eating. His name changed the colour of her face.

Besides this big dominant terror which never left her, she had a hundred others. She used to listen with eager ears to the many love-adventures recounted in the inn, if haply she might catch that name of Laura.

She had not been two months in London when, already, she knew that Laura had a lover.

This one, however, did not excite in her any unqualified terror. She had looked into his face and seen that it was good and gentle; but he was young in his nonage, and very poor. Her dream, her ideal, for Laura was—Marriage.

His name was Mark Bonner.

He began by passing very often along a side-street in the Whitefriars, and glancing at a certain casement; and across this casement, sometimes, a face with a daintily-built-up head of black hair would saunter with a musing, coquetish air.

Bonner was a scholar, and eighteen. The future held in it for him this vision of glory—the Bachelariat of Arts. He had heard of Aristotle, and dreamed of him; he had read Terence; he knew Cicero by heart.

He attended classes at the new Paul's School of Master Colet in his threadbare saracen doublet. In odd ways he eked out a livelihood, hanging often in the capacity of servant about the courtyards of my Lord Cardinal, and running errands.

Wolsey knew his face, and once, in the clock-yard at Hampton, had honoured him with the memorable favour of a glance.

Mark Bonner bought a new shallow velvet bonnet at a frippery-store with his last angel, and set it jauntily on his head. He began to pass and repass in the Whitefriars, shot to the heart.

He had a very spiritual face on his lank body. The forehead widened as it went up, and the chin lengthened down into a delicate, quaint point. His lips were like two scarlet threads on a pallid ground, and his eyes were large, and luminous, and swam in melancholy.

And Laura from that overhanging small-paned window could divine all this.

CHAPTER II. THE HEART-CRY.

LONG before the end of the second month Laura began to pout. She had on her upper lip a downy growth of just-visible black hair, which added a poignant something of humanity to her divinity; it was one of those defects which enhance and ravish. When she pouted in her childish, sulky way, this hint of a moustache made her little thick pale-rose mouth an object of worship.

She pouted, and decided that she was neither a nun, nor a nursery flower, nor a King's Prisoner.

She began to steal out in short, tentative promenades to the top of the next bye-way and back.

Once she knew that she was being followed by a great bearded warrior, and instinctively took to her heels; once she was chucked under the chin by a marshalman, and reddened like a peony; once she was seized and forcibly kissed by a hostler, and pouted all the day.

But she continued her walks, and daringly extended them. Of all this she said not a word to Bessie.

Once Mark Bonner saw her picking her steps in the mud of the unpaved street. Here was that for which he had wildly hoped. But instead of being in Heaven, he was rather in purgatory. He could not address her; his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. As he brushed by her with hung head, she saw his crimson face and the trembling of his reined white hand.

The next day she received a love poem with the last line of each verse in Latin. She could by chance barely read the English tongue, so Latin was beyond her. But she conceived a great reverence for the scholar, and a week later a jolly Augustinian, who came to collect abbey-dues (for the house was within the manor of the Hospital of St. Barts), told her with a flourish that the meaning of "*Te dulcem meam amo*" was this: "I love thee, my sweet one."

Twice more they carefully met, and hurriedly passed, like ships on the sea, without voice; but the third time Laura, with ice-cold hands and bounding heart, laughed a challenging giggle to herself, and Mark hearing it, stopped, hesitated in the throes of a thousand indecisions, and turned; he whispered huskily to her in a throat so parched that the words were lost.

However, he walked by her side, and when they parted, he uncovered, and laid his lips upon her hand.

Rising and looking from her window in the dead of night, she saw him stand there below, and the lonesome gleam of the rare candle-light of the alley showed his up-looking face.

After that they met daily, and a great mystery was revealed to Southern-blooded Laura Ford. Within these two began to stir that Spirit which from the seed brings forth the Harvest. Then suddenly it was as though a great Sun dazzled their eyes.

"How lovely you are!" he said.

"And you also," she replied.

Laura's face was as though it had been washed in morning dew. They fell to speaking to each other in a language that resembled song rather than simple speech. At this time they did not know each other's name.

Onward from the Fleet down to Westminster was still open fields and tree-land, varied only by the new palaces of my Lords Essex, Arundel, Somerset. And hither, as evening fell, and hardly a hay-cart drawled in sight, they wandered, or halted by the river, or whispered their intense secrets under bowers of the ducal grounds.

"Faith, here is the thought that gives me pause—if I had never seen you!" he said.

"That would have been impossible."

"Faith, but 'twas by sheer hazard of my good star!"

"What would you have done?"

"I? I should even have died! By God's light, what could I have done? You are my very life!"

"What, you love me so, sir?"

"Stars of the Night, bear witness!"

"And always—from the very first sight you had of me—I knew that it was so with you!"

"From the first sight, and before."

"How—before?"

"Oh, long I have known you. When a little boy, I saw once your face in a clear running brook of the wood; I have divined you in my reading of Helen, the Greek; I have foreknown you in miraculous dreams of the night; nothing in the earth is lovely, sweet, which does not resemble you; in the faces of new-born children, and in the smells of flowers, and in the corn-shocks of harvest, and in all the motions and method of the world, I have had hints and presages of you, oh, my dearest dear!"

She looked at him with eyes in trance.

"In my sooth, what a music 'tis you speak! It is surely so the angels in Heaven chant, sir!"

"You love me?"

"Ah—I cannot speak such words as you—"

"But you love me? You love me?"

"Ah—"

Her sigh faded in the anguish of its utterance; she was in torture for lack of expression; her fulness was a pain. She reached up her pale pouting mouth, in abandoned offering to his.

Then, after a while:

"But my sister—she will surely, surely know!"

"And how, prithee?"

"She even will—for she knows all."

"Is she gentle and good?"

"Oh, she is very, very good, my sister. But—"

"You must tell her."

"If I dare!"

"Let me."

"Is it that we will be married?"

"Why, my pig's-eye—yes."

"When?"

"Ah, when! I lack substance! When the wind shall fill my sail! I have twice attracted the great Cardinal's eye; and he is, you know, the patron of poor scholars. Do you like poverty?"

"No."

"Not?"

"No."

"But to me it were Heaven with you."

"I do not like poverty, I. Have you seen the interior of a great palace? I have, at Winchester. Oh, the mighty big mansion-house, and the gaudy menials, and the bravery! I like that. If I had that, and you also, then should I be happy indeed."

"But of the two you prefer—which?"

"I like both."

"But you prefer—which?"

"Why, you."

"Crowned Saint!"

"But my sister—what shall be done?"

"I will speak to her."

"If that be indeed the best——?"

"Why, yes, as I deem it."

They rose up to walk homeward, and on the morrow Mark Bonner was at the "Bell." He stammered his tale. But under the still eyes of Bessie Ford, he felt the sensation of scrutiny, and chill reception.

CHAPTER III. CROM ABOO.

THE "Bell" was full of uproar.

From the dim winding street, paved with oval pavers, and rankly grass-grown, one descended by three stone steps through a hooded doorway into a room so sombre, that for a time the eye saw nothing but gloom.

Some faint light, however, came in from a passage which led to a yard at the back.

In the front, exactly at the centre of the four gables of the house, stood a great post bearing the sign of a black Bell on a red ground.

It was three in the afternoon.

A horseman came eastward toward the Bell. A noise of revelry went out to him as he approached. He had been in London three weeks, and each day had made the Bell his haunt. But to-day he hesitated.

He had in his holster two letters of high importance. One was to the Governor of the Tower of London; one to my Lord Wolsey. Both were from the King, written with his own hand. The latter letter contained thoughts, arguments, state-secrets, which King Henry would have forfeited a year's revenue of the realm rather than have them seen by an eye other than his cardinal's.

The noise of revelry came out to meet him, but the horseman went past the sign-post of the Bell, going eastward to the Tower.

He was a man of gigantic size, standing six feet above his spurs. His russet-leather jerkin covered a heroic breadth of chest, a mighty broadsword hanging at the buff-belt, and on the other side a pair of pistols, and a dagger-daggar.

He went past the sign-post—and turned back again.

On his broad massive face there was a smile now. It was a happy and genial face, good-natured, with humour in the lines of the mouth, and great phrenological bosses on the forehead, and clean-shaven over-all. That forehead was pure white, but the expanse of face was ruddy and tanned, and crossed with the scars of many a hack. Surely, Garrett Oge Fitzgerald had been in the wars.

He was a bastard son of a bastard branch of the great Geraldines of Kildare, his great-half-uncle being even then the King's deputy at Dublin. Yet Garrett Oge was the possessor of one only happy-noble in his slop-pouch.

He called: "Hi! Hi!" threw his reins to the tapster who hurried out, and, as he ran down into the parlour, waved his arm round and cried:

"Crom aboo!"

It was the war-cry of the Geraldines.

He was received by a shout of welcome, and a lifting of the six-hooped pots.

Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, in the midst of that uproar touched with his finger the pocket in the murrey taffeta lining of his riding-cloak, which he wore slung from one shoulder, to make certain that his letters were there; he had taken the precaution to remove them from his holster to his person, and he was not a cautious man.

New brooms sweep clean; he had that morning, after three weeks care and contradiction, been admitted into the King's Guards, one happy-noble, as we say, being left in his slop-pouch.

He cried above the din:

"A stoup of your spiciest canaries, mine host! Who's for drinking with me the King's health? Ah, little wench—"

He touched Bessie Ford playfully under the chin.

"What, the King's health?" cried a jolly mercer of London Bridge. "Adding two and two to make four, one would say that Master Fitzgerald has e'en won his entry into the King's service at the last."

"Ods daggers, my masters, the King has e'en won his entry into the service of Master Fitzgerald, if that's what you would say!"

So said Fitzgerald, and the laugh rang high. Now all were happy, having in their midst a tongue that bred

merriment; and the tongue itself was happy, having before it a pot of mulled sack, sunlight-coloured, placed there by demure, silent, assiduous Bessie Ford.

As Fitzgerald poured down his first long draught, a hand fell on his shoulder, and a voice said in the lower tone of friendship:

"What, Fitz—"

"What, Macdonald, my good friend and ingie! Beshrew my heart, but I saw thee not before."

"Is it so with thee? Is it true?"

"About the King? Aye, true as a cup of clary is bright."

"Fitz, I congratulate thee from my heart."

"Congratulate the King, Mac."

"Both, Fitz. But tell me the manner o't, lad. How did the King take to an unthrif and scant-o'-grace like thyself?"

Their voices were now higher raised. From the small tables scattered over the red-stone floor, from the black-oak corners, gathered some of the revellers, with pewter flagons and tankards in hand. As for Bessie Ford and the tapster, they plied busily between the spigot and the tables, and every launcet of the sack-butts flowed with cheer. Mine host, a bulky old widower, lolled drinking muscadine at one of the tables with his guests.

"Well, it was on this wise," said Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, "for two weeks, as you wot, I have been loitering at the levee-time in the antechamber at Westminster; but never

a chance had poor Fitz, in the busy going and coming, and that shoulder-rubbing of great dukes, and Corinthians, and gallants. Oh, 'tis a brave show there o' mornings, my masters, ambassadors, princes, courtiers, Frenchman and Spaniard, doublets pinked with Venice gold, and inlaid foils that water a fighting-man's mouth. And says Fitz to himself: How through all this bedizenment shall a poor soldier of fortune arrive at the King's eyes to show his proportions? For it was even the King himself, I deemed, that must needs see a man like me, and no linsey-wolsey captain of the service. So I dallied from day to day, till yesterday morning a great lord with lackeys and much ado comes sauntering through, and what name should I hear announced but my very own: Garrett Oge Fitzgerald. It was my great-uncle, the Deputy, whom, God wot, I never saw before. If now, I thought, I can get that name sent in on my own count, and so slip into the King, all's well. So next morning, with a high head, I gave that name to a myrmidon. He eyed my apparel, but said never a word from his scorning lips, nor did he cry me out, while many another came and went. So I, at the last, was slouching down the front staircase, when into the courtyard came a lady. She was unattended by cavaliers, her face had an aspect forlorn, and she was all in robes of black. I was not such a chuff as not to divine in her the Queen, and she had no sooner put her boot from the coach than I was there to her assisting. She drew back from me somewhat. 'Would you see the King, madam?' said I.

"Yes—and who are you, sir?" says she.

"Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, madam," said I.

"She bowed and smiled, leaned on my arm, and in two minutes the Queen Katherine and Oge Fitzgerald were cried together."

"The King was walking to and fro, hands behind his back, and on his brow sat wrinkled thought. He turned and saw us, and 'Ha, cor,' cries he, 'how goes the morning with you? But this is strange companionship—you and my Lord Fitzgerald. Ha, sirrah! who the pestilence art thou?"

"Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, sire," said I reproachfully.

"Gallant he is the King when he frowns and puts on kingly anger, tall and massive, cocking one well-turned leg afore, and a face large and strong, not unlike mine own, my masters, and a way of twisting his lips aside and gnawing the point at a corner. Just so he contemplated me—now gnawing his wry-pushed lips, now drawing in a moustache end with his tongue to gnaw, meditating upon me, angry; and very chill and threatening in the regard of his eyes, and severe, and hard to bear without a pallor, my masters all."

"And he says 'So, scullion,' says he, 'thou would'st mock at me, then?"

"Far be that from me, sire."

"What is thy name?"

"Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, sire."

"Ha! again thou liest."

"It is you rather, sire, for that is even my name."

"Hi, there, my Guards!" cries the King; "thy neck for this, scullion!"

"Before I was fluttery, but now cool as a gaze-bound's nose at the near bracing danger. Three minions ran with

drawn swords, but I spoke: 'Your Majesty is really astray, for that is my true name in baptism. 'Tis true I bear a bar-minister on my coat, and 'tis true the Lord of Kildare claims my identical name, but 'tis without my approbation or consent. The Queen here will bear me out; she straightway scented me the real and only Fitzgerald, sire.'

"I had no sooner said than back went the King's head in a shout of sudden laughter. The Queen, methinks, is no longer favourite there, and her foreign mistakes and inaptitudes become food for scornful mirth. But for me, I was saved, and,

"Unhand him, knaves," says the King; and to me:

"What is thy true name, sirrah?"

"Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, sire."

"Thou hast served in the wars, methinks?"

"In the Low Countries, sire, and in Ireland."

"Art thou leal and trusty?"

"Try me, sire!"

"Thou deservest for thy audacity either to taste the Tyburn tippet, or to enter the King's own service; what think'st thou?"

"I am like to do both, sire, taking the least exalted first."

"Thou seemest Kildare to thy tongue's tip, villain. Send me thy name in an hour."

"And so, my masters, was it that I come to have in my cloak here, two letters—one to my Lord Wolsey, and one to the Tower—letters of high and solemn import, writ by the

"Tush, comrade," said Fitz to Mac "care killed a cat. The King knows to whom he trusts his letters. I say, my masters, 'tis whispered among the Guards that the King is in love again."

"By my sooth," said a gruff butcher from the Cheap, "'tis the forty-fifth tale of kingly love within a month!"

"Aye," answered Fitz, "a damsel and a half a day."

"And who is the new Lindebrides?"

"A certain Mistress Anne Boleyn."

"Gramercy—that is an oldish tale enough," observed mine host.

"He hath fallen in love with her afore, forgetting that he had done it afore," said Fitz; "I heard the news as new."

"New, quotha!" cried a tipsy reeve of the Abbot of Paul's, "why, the fame of her has long been everywhere; she's the cream of dainty moppets."

"Tush!" cried Fitz.

"You gainsay me? Why, is she not known for the prettiest piece of femaledom in all the breadth of England?"

"Tush!" said Fitz.

"By the mass, here's a paltering fellow talks like a new-returned from the Spanish Indies! He knows not the fame of Mistress Anne!" said a King's Pursuivant, loitering here with a King's Warrant in his doublet-breast.

"In faith, I'd give not one peeped codling for your Mistress Anne!" said Fitz, and looked round challengingly.

"Come, Fitz," said Macdonald, with laughter in his eyes, "'tis clear thou hast been following thy master's ensample, and hast been caught by one fairer, for thou hast a beam of pre-judgment in thine eye. The Lady Anne is indeed fair, for I have seen her."

"Tush, tush," said Fitz.

The head and eyes of Fitz were directed upward upon one great black joist of the ceiling, and they were full of tasty musings, and on his lips was the smile of pleased remembrance. Looking up, he uttered this judgment slowly, with calm authority:

"The King never, never saw a lovely wench."

As he said it, a mug dropped from the hand of Bessie Ford, and smashed upon the tiles—a mug containing costly wine of Alicante.

"Come, my masters, draw near—Master Fitzgerald hath o'en an adventure upon his tongue!" cried the mercer.

"Provided it concerns not any of the great folk, Fitz," whispered Macdonald warningly.

Fitz suddenly took his eyes from the ceiling, and smiting the table, cried:

"She is the rarest—the glorious—the gaudiest little perroquet that ever



Fond Mother: "Oh, Harry! baby can say 'cow.' Say 'cow,' baby."

Baby: "Moo!"

Fond Mother: "There! isn't that sweet!"

King's own hand. Already he hath in Fitz the confidence of old friendship. A right royal personage is he—do me right my masters all—and here's to him!"

"But thy tongue, thy tongue Fitz, runs too abominably fast!" whispered his friend Macdonald. "Gad-a-mercy, mon, hast thou no inkling of prudence?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE FATAL ACT.

At this reproof Fitz looked up in demure surprise. He had the massive, staid face of a statesman, and the simple heart of a child. He was a man more loved than respected, Fitz—till his white forehead flushed, and he chanced to draw his sword; and then he was much more respected than loved.

As for Macdonald, he was a fellow built on a smaller scale, but well-knit, agile, yet weighty-looking. Between the parting of his moustache in the middle one saw how the upper lip pressed down like strength itself upon the lower, and the brown eyes glinted shrewd and hard as cold steel beneath the lowered lids.

He was somewhat of a dandy, with an eye to his apparel; for his doublet was laid down with two galeon laces, and on his head was a slouch hat with drooping feather, and in his Turkey-leather sword-belt a poniard of Milan arabesque-work; a fellow neat, and wary, and canny, a Scot all through, having a care for his life. He had fought both at Guinegate and Flodden, and was a Wolsey's-man.

His eyes saw many things; and as Fitz spoke about the King's letters, he had seen the start, and the slow advance toward the table of a man who, he was sure, was a stranger at the "Bell."

It was a tall man, muffled in a voluminous black riding-cloak, and wearing the Spanish plumed bonnet of a hidalgo. He was all in black and silver, a silver buckle in his cap, a silver brooch, a silver hilt to his rapier; and what one saw of his swarthy, regular-featured face proved him foreigner.

flashed from bough to bough!"

"Who, then?"

"The damsel who is mine."

"What, already?"

"She will be to-morrow at this time."

"And her name?"

"Her name I will not tell. Bah! why not? Her name is Laura, if you would know."

"Laura—what?"

"That I know not."

"And you encountered her—where?"

"In the Whitefriars—in the hiddenest nook—"

"When, though?"

"Three days since."

"And you had speech with her."

"Troth, yes. Oh, 'tis the shrewdest minx! coy, yet sly, showing impudent blushes, pouting compliances. She would speak, and yet would not, she would say 'no,' and mean 'yes.' Oh, 'tis the naughtiest bit of purity!"

The poor little chamberlain of the Bell Inn tripped over someone's foot, and sent flying a stoup of good Sheres wine; it was the second bit of broken crockery within two minutes.

"Why, Bessie, lass," said mine host, now greatly fuddled, "what make you there?"

The little face was white; her neat, unadorned black-velvet waistcoat swelled and sank distractedly; the string of rowantree berries about her neck shook with strong agitation. She hid away her face from sight.

"But what is thy plan, Fitz?" said Macdonald. "Wilt thou—"

"I never make a plan, Mac, till I am in the act of carrying it out."

"But, by my credit, you swim in the tide of luck, my master," said the crafty-eyed Pursuivant, pushing out his yellow-ivory wedge-face; "for you may present this beauty before the King's Majesty. Nay, frown not like the devil o'er-looking Lincoln Town—"

The tendency to-day is for short and crisp stories rather than for long and heavy ones, and in this matter you cannot do better than get a current number of **SHORT STORIES**. It costs a penny, and is published every Tuesday.

"The first duty of a King's Guard is to guard the King," said Fitz, "and from presumptuous follies above all, even at his own salvation's peril. Count upon Fitz to do his devoirs there."

"But the manner of thy courting, Fitz?" said Mac, feasting on his friend's free-tongued simplicity.

"Oh, 'twas in an alley: there she tripped, stepping with shown instep and fragile ankle. And 'mam'sel,' said I, 'sure for a look of that soft and black-brown hair I would carry you all your journey in my arms.'

"And she: 'Tis useless, sir, to waste your time, for I have a gallant whom I love, and a sister whom I fear.'

"Ods dagners, mam'sel," I riposted, 'that knot were easy cut; for the gallant whom you love shall wed the sister whom you fear (or I will wed his costard to my poniard), and you, well rid of both, shall wed with me.'

She laughed.

"And 'tis a witty solution, sir," she said, "and a most hasty proposition."

"Mam'sel, I am a Fitzgerald of Kildare."

"I suppose it is a noble family, sir, with mansions and demesnes?"

"It is, mam'sel."

"Still, 'tis useless: I know one whom, though poor, I prefer to all your quarterings—though to be not so tall and manful, I avouch."

"Do you affect a tall and manful man, mam'sel?"

"Well, sir, young maidens are pleased by such men."

"Then, here is one for you, mam'sel—the very thing—this sounding chest, this fair brow, this sword, mam'sel."

"Gad-a-mercy, sir," says she, with tittering, "you retail your points like a frippery-showman: yet I say not 'tis unhandsonely done."

"Thou art the choicest morsel, mam'sel, that goes uncooked in Europe."

"But you, sir, must needs munch other sweet-meats: for I am not for thee."

"By the Mass, the choicest morsel, thou, the daintiest minx, the costliest pig's-eye—"

"Thou me not, prithee, sir, for I am another's—"

and she laughed the mockingest mavis-laugh.

"By blood and nails, though shalt be mine, mam'sel!"

"In faith, not by fair means, sir," says she.

"Then, by blood and nails, mam'sel, by foul!"

"By my sooth, sir, you fire quickly: I swear you frighten me!"

"Wilt thou say me a yea?"

"Faith, you make me laugh and cry together, sir. Only by force could I be won by you."

"Where dost thou dwell?"

"That I will not say, sir; 'tis true I pass here each day about this hour."

"I left her then, and tracked her to her domicile, and this was the manner of our first courting-time."

"But thy scheme, Fitz," said Macdonald, "wilt thou use force, thou gamesome gibbet-carrion?"

"Force, aye, and this very night."

"What! and whither wilt thou bear her?"

"To an old granddame's, where I have made terms in Hounslow."

"But by the damsel's will?"

"Nay, but by force."

"Oh, thou merry gaul-crow, Fitz!"

"Nay, 'tis honourable. Steal a broad-piece and thou art a felon; steal ten thousand, and thou art an exchanger; steal that most precious, a woman, and thou art a gallant."

"But how wilt set to work—thou frolic villain!"

"I will set well to work; for I shall have a drawn sword in my hand."

There was a square black-oak post, upon which, for one moment, Bessie Ford staggered and leant. But by a power of will which was hers, she kept from fainting.

"A drawn sword, sir, say you?" said a voice—the voice of the black-dressed stranger.

"Aye, sir, I said that," said Fitz, looking round and up.

"Bah! your whole tale of the girl is a mere curriish fantasy of your invention," said the stranger.

Fitz's grey eyes opened wide, looking about the room in amazement.

"Death, my masters," he said, "here is a gentleman who gives the unprovoked lie to a Geraldine."

Macdonald whispered low:

"He seeks for his own ends to pick a quarrel with thee; answer him not, or fell him with thy fist."

Fitz took no notice.

"Sayest thou that I lie, sirrah?" he asked, turning in wonderment on his stool to face the stranger.

"Yes. You lie."

"Crom aboo!" cried Fitz, springing up, a brand of red on his forehead, his sword half-drawn.

"Fitz, Fitz," said Macdonald.

"But surely, the gentleman is not in his serious earnest?" said Fitz; "are you in your serious earnest, my master?"

"You lie."

"Then by hilt and point, I spatter your brains for it!"

Fitz's quick blood in that one instant grinded and simmered. He looked now a very noble, kingly fellow, his big dark head thrown back, and his mantle, in which were the King's letters, hanging from a shoulder. But he said quietly enough:

"Draw, sir."

"Hold!" cried mine host, drunk now, "all duels in the back court, my masters, I pray you."

The stranger made with his arm a courtly wave of invitation toward the passage; and at once the whole roomful of fuddled men made in that direction. Fitzgerald on the way, hurriedly undid his cloak to disencumber himself, and flung it casually upon a table by which he passed. The King had clean vanished from that heated brain.

Through the passage they trooped—mine host, too, the tapster, the hostler; out into a wide court paved with discoloured flags, a well-and-bucket in a corner, some hens

and a cock, some stables, and water trickling leisurely over the pastilles of the gutter. Here had been the last earthly scene of many a brave man.

"Ready, sir—draw!"

It was begun at once, without ceremony. Clash, clash.

The foreigner had retained his mantle, and wrapped it thick round his left fore-arm, using it as a shield. He was nearly as tall as Fitzgerald, though much more slenderly built. And from the very first few passes, it became clear that he was an antagonist of awful skill.

Macdonald drew in his breath. He had an eye of clearest judgment; and the first passes boded ill. Fitzgerald, he knew, had in him a quart of the "Bell's" strongest canaries. But if he fell, there would be a second trial of skill: Macdonald secretly examined his own edge.

Clash, clash, with a continual motion, to and fro, back and fore, at the lithe-sheering hips of the fighters. The revellers stood grouped around, with breathless comments, eager peerings.

Always the stranger smiled his haughty calm smile. He parried Fitzgerald's strong strokes with a wrist of chilled steel, and ever with the same exact precision. The face of Fitzgerald grew to crimson, and, suddenly, at a quick foim made high up by the foreigner, down the left cheek of the Geraldine came winding a scarlet thread.

"Steady, Fitz, steady . . ." whispered Macdonald under his breath.

But steadiness was soon no longer part of the game. Both men's mouths were open now to let out the heaving breath. The combat began to stagger like epilepsis, hither and thither, within some four feet of arca. The crowd opened wider, stooping forward, hands on knees, their souls in their eyes.

Fitzgerald had not as yet got in a scratch. The fight from moment to moment, became horrible, brutal. The Geraldine had met the Devil. In his surprise, his rage of incredulity, Fitzgerald grew crazy for blood. He hacked with the fury of a man extinguishing a flame. The rapier of the stranger must have been seven times tempered in Damascene forges to resist that oscillating, impetuous blade; and his science was Satanic. Yet he, too, was amazed: never had he encountered wrath so shrewd and quick as the wrath before him now.

Wider and wider the combat staggered. There was a rip of cloth, a spout of blood, wet red on the paving-tiles. The stranger's rapier had entered the left upper arm of Fitzgerald and, with swift outward wheel, torn through the flesh; at the same time, he staggered over a cocked-up tile-edge, and Fitzgerald's blade plunged into the mass of cloth round the stranger's hand, and came away with a long ripping noise of rent fabric, just in time to strike into air the rapier making prone for his heart.

Clash, clash, they go afresh: but now the combat fills all the yard, and the spectators are cringing against the wall, and on its top the hens and the cock look on silent, with round, sage, sideward eye. The redness of Fitzgerald's face has turned to a mottled pallor, and on both sides all pretence of coolness is gone, and they rush round, stooping, with murderous stare, with venomous rage, and an audible humph, humph, of their gasping bosoms. The sallow face of the foreigner is now a face of mere wild ecstasy. He darts anew upon Fitzgerald, and in a moment of opportunity, hacks between neck and shoulder; Fitzgerald feints a hew at the head: up goes the parrying rapier: Fitzgerald makes the tierce thrust, and enters between the third and fourth rib; back comes a second time the wild rapier between neck and shoulder, and up flies the broadsword in a tardy attempt at parry; now the stranger has him: the broad breast is undefended: the stranger foins at quarte: the rapier is prone career for Fitzgerald's heart: but Fitzgerald stumbles, lurches—the rapier pricks his abdomen; and at that instant the flapping rags of the stranger's cloak are in his eyes. "Hew, Fitz, hew!" hisses Macdonald. Fitz hews; his blade, feeble now, drops upon the stranger's skull. The rapier leaps far, with clattering fall: there is a thud: a skull strikes the flags: Fitz falls upon the stranger, and immediately leaps up, and with wry mouth—laughs a little.

But that poor fluttering heart in the dimness of the parlour yonder! It was worse with her than with the wounded stranger lying white in his blood.

Bessie was whiter still than he. She, a girl from the country—a simple wench—and what a thing was this which she was about to do!

The hand she held out fluttered like shaken reeds; there was a panic stare in her eyes; her breath came raspingly, like the breath of Fitz in the court.

For her, a simple country-girl, fresh come to London, ignorant of the unguessably vast consequences of her act, it was an awful deed to do!—a thing more daring than the leap of a horseman into some bottomless chasm.

But she did not hesitate at all. She saw the fall of the stranger: she saw Fitzgerald stand, hale and hearty—she saw him laugh. He was the man who that night was to dispossess her nest, and ravish her life. She put out her hand.

Oh, Fitz would have quite other cares, altogether different sorts of occupation that night, than the abduction of innocent damsels! He would clean forget the very existence of Laura Ford!

Out went the little fluttered hand. That inverted bowl which was her brow, with the clean, chaste, low curves of hair, was wrinkled with the horizontal lines of wide-eyed scare; her little nose was pinched; her little heart seemed beating itself to death. But never in the bosom of Cour-de-lion, or of armoured warrior, beat one bolder, more audacious.

She did not hesitate at all. Her hand was in the clasp of Garrett Oge Fitzgerald. She glanced once crazily round the room; it was wholly deserted. She touched the letters, held them, drew them out.

Then she ran from the room, hunted by terrors. It was the fatal act of her life.

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF

FOOTBALL COMPETITION.

No. 15.

Five Competitors carry off the £25 prize between them this week, each of them having sent in a list containing only one mistake. They are:

ALBERT PARFITT, "Heatherlands," Pretoria Road, Upper Knowle, Bristol.

M. WEBB, St. Kilda, Warrington Road, Richmond (two shares).

A. LISLE, Holy Villa, Shear Road, Bevois Mount, Southampton.

C. CLEVERDON, 2 Telford Terrace, Herne Bay.

W. R. RIDGWELL, High Street, Orsett, Grays, Essex.

Football Competition.

PRIZES OF £1,000, £100, £25.

THE Football Clubs named below play on Saturday, December 31st. To the reader who names the correct result of all these matches we will pay the sum of ONE HUNDRED POUNDS. In the event of two or more being correct the money will be divided.

If no competitor gives a quite correct solution TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS will be divided amongst those nearest. If between now and the close of the football season any one competitor wins the hundred pounds prize in full three times consecutively we will make him a further present of ONE THOUSAND POUNDS.

Football Coupon No. 18.

Matches to be played on Saturday, December 31st.

Cross out which you consider will be the losing clubs. For a draw don't cross out either.

1 Stoke	✓	2 Aston Villa.
3 Sheffield Wednesday	✓	4 Liverpool.
5 Wolverhampton Wanderers	✓	6 Newcastle United.
7 Bury	✓	8 Derby County.
9 Everton	✓	10 Sheffield United.
11 Notts County	✓	12 Burnley.
13 Lincoln City	✓	14 Leicester Fosse.
15 Royal Artillery	✓	16 Sheppey United.
17 Swindon	✓	18 Tottenham Hotspur.
19 Crewe Alexandra	✓	20 Rochdale.
21 Third Lanark	✓	22 Celtic.
23 Coventry	✓	24 Blackheath.
25 Richmond	✓	26 Fettesian-Lorrettonians.
27 Leicester	✓	28 Cardiff.
29 Devonport Albion	✓	30 Llanelli.
31 Leigh	✓	32 Widnes.

Name

Address

CUT OUT COUPON AND POST TO US UNFOLDED.

In Pearson's Athletic Record published on Wednesday, December 28th, you will find the past performances of the above clubs dealt with, and their comparative chances in these matches fully discussed.

THINGS TO REMEMBER.

1. Coupons may be sent either from P.W. or the Athletic Record. In the latter paper will be found valuable hints as to which side is likely to win.
2. Nobody must enter for this competition who will not abide by the Editor's final decision.
3. All coupons must reach us not later than Saturday, December 31st, first post. Any envelope bearing a postmark later than Friday, December 30th, will be disqualified.
4. Competitors should cut out the above coupon, score it as directed put their name and address in the space provided, and send to FOOTBALL No. 18, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C.

For the convenience of those who wish to make more than one attempt we have prepared separate coupons, which we will send by post to applicants at the rate of twenty for a shilling. Those who want them must send postal orders for as many sheets of twenty as they require, and must inclose a stamped addressed envelope. Coupons will be sent by return and are made available for any week. The sheets may be cut up and the coupons used singly if desired.

APPLICATIONS FOR COUPONS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO C. ARTHUR PEARSON LIMITED, HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

WHEN YOU ARE OUT WALKING.

How Do Your Friends Salute You in the Street?

It is interesting to observe the different modes of salutation that prevail even within the limits of one country.

Here in Britain, bowing, uncovering the head, pressing the hand, embracing and kissing are the usual modes in which good-will, esteem and love are expressed.

In more or less form these habits or particular customs are identified with the national characteristics of other nations, but even when contrasting the customs of salutation between country and country within the European area we come across wide differences and distinctions.

In Germany, for instance, to digress from our theme for a moment, it is considered an act of politeness to kiss the hands of a lady when you meet her, but in Italy this is a formality only permitted to nearest relatives. There are many other similar differences with pronounced distinctions.

The street salutation of the British aristocrat is usually stiff. The curve of the line that the proud, blue-blooded patrician makes in the air as he raises his hand to the brim of his hat is graceful enough, but it represents somewhat the initials of a man's name in that it is made to stand for something more than it shows.



"What ho, old cockle!"

live within those areas, but for contrasting purposes it will be allowed. The fascinating blink and the homely smile of the coxer, as he nods his head in the direction of a friend on the other side of the street, are worth taking notice of as the movement produces quite a wealth of good humour, esteem, and love—love in its crude, unrehearsed form.

The "What ho, 'Arry, ain't ye working nar?" aids digestion of the food of thought; it gives a healthy tone to the mind, and there is in it a lesson of sincerity. If he shouts at his friend across the street it may offend your delicate soft, sensitive ears, but coarse though it may be, that shout bears on its bosom the spirit of sincerity which freshens, and brightens up the soul of the other friend.

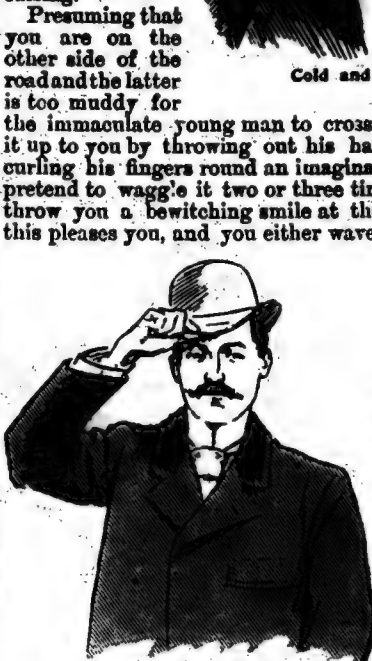
People of the middle class have a common way of greeting their friends when they meet in the street; there is nothing special in the acknowledgment at all. It seems intuitive in us to wave our hand or to raise our hat, or to smile at an approaching friend, but if we stayed these proceedings we should be just as happy, for as soon as our friend has passed, he passes, too, out of our thoughts.



The will for the deed.

The heartiness of an acknowledgment depends largely upon disposition. The man whose thoughts are fixed on some business problem will cut his greeting very short, and will probably forget to raise his hat to your lady friend, or even to touch his hat out of respect to you, but he whose time is his own will make a special thing of his hat raising.

Presuming that you are on the other side of the road and the latter is too muddy for the immaculate young man to cross over, he will make it up to you by throwing out his hand and gracefully curling his fingers round an imaginary something, will pretend to waggle it two or three times. He will also throw you a bewitching smile at the same time. All this pleases you, and you either wave your stick at him or you merely nod your head and pass on.



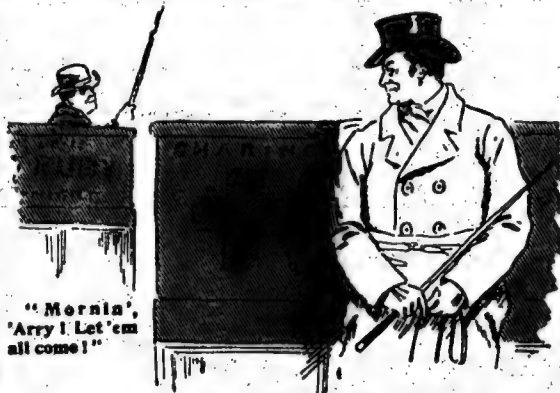
Cold and critical.



The common or garden salute.

is short and sweet, and the trick's done; they pass on. The same recognition is meted out to lady friend and foe alike, and that is where women are so methodical. Not so men, and here is where men are illogical, if more candid.

The salute which is most common to the average man in the street is that one which is rather in keeping with the characteristics of the age; it is quick, manly, and



"Mornin', 'Arry! Let 'em all come!"

withal sincere. This salute consists of touching the brim of your hat and raising the latter slightly; that's all you want. It is respectful; it is an act of many a cultured man; it does not take up much time, and if it is limited in form it is extravagant in another way, for it is accompanied with a much broader smile than was usually the case in former days.

I suppose there is science even in knowing how to raise your hat to a friend properly, just as there is science in the kick the savage black, who resides in certain districts of darkest Africa, gives his friend when they meet.



Their bow is frigid.

Of all the people who salute and who get saluted in return, perhaps, bus-drivers come first. It is a rare thing for a bus-driver to pass the second bus without his knowing the driver of it, and the nod or other mode of salutation, of course, follows.

This consists usually of a bland smile curling up on an open, honest countenance, while the whip is jerked in the air. The other "gen'l-man" does ditto. Of course, an encouraging word is exchanged between the friends; the strength of that word varying sometimes, but now and again it is so strong that it is enough to curl the little tuft of hair on the top of your head with surprise.

The bus-driver's remarks to his friend on the second bus are of an innocent kind if jocular, and nothing short of an Act of Parliament will stop him from his jokelets. It relieves him; without his friendly gibes he would be a lame thing, poor and not able to work. Of course, the discourse sometimes partakes of maritime language rather, but the friendly salute with the whip and the smile drowns the current of the wave of words.



You see this in the country.

When two girls are together in the street, the only subject of their conversation is Mr. Brown or Jones. When either one of these gentlemen is seen approaching, both girls equally share in their salutation; both look as if they would like to eat him, they smile so benignly at him, and, altogether, the salute is effective, happy, and full of human character.

Not so the ladies riding in a carriage who happen to see a male friend of theirs saluting them. Their bow is stiff, there is no warmth in it, no soul in it, it is frigid, lifeless; in fact, ugly, compared with the joyous and merry nod of the head of their less fortunate sisters.

The old countryman's method of greeting the coming of a friend is characteristic of the man himself in that it is of a simple kind, but if it is not quite a work of art, the ray of light that dances in the old man's face and eyes, making him look ten years younger, and the uplifting of the withered hand, all of which portend his joy, may be, at any rate, regarded as a standard of a true-hearted, sincere, welcome, happy salute.

If you are particular about your appearance, that is to say, you are very young and inclined to be "mashy," and you are costumed in flannels, a blazer, and a peaked cap, you feel distressed when you see in the distance that your best girl is coming along. You don't want to ruffle your hair, and yet if you take your cap right off you are sure of doing that, if only in putting it on again. Pretend to raise it by the button.



He tries not to ruffle his hair.

SILENT * SENTINELS.

By Edward Noble.

"Qui non vetat peccare, cum possit, jubet."

My friend turned and stood looking out across the river as he spoke, his face imperturbable, his eyes stern, coldly stern, and without a trace of the emotion he had thrown into the ringing old Latin.

I watched him a moment in silence. It was evident he had gone through a worrying; it was evident also, that if one remarked on that obvious fact he would deny it. I thought it wise to temporise.

"That is true," I returned; "but a man is not bound to go out of his way to discover crime."

"That is a negative proposition you hardly expect me to notice. I know you better, Ralston, your anxiety for my comfort is too apparent; as I have remarked before, you have a tell-tale face, a child could read it. But," he went on, a tinge of sorrow creeping into his voice, "you are wrong. I did not go out of my way to discover this thing, it came to me."

This conversation took place on the River-ton Pier, whither I had journeyed in response to an invitation to meet my friend, Captain Gaskin. Some weeks previously, I had jokingly referred to the impossibility of a recurrence of the mysteries of long ago, and Gaskin had challenged me. I knew, therefore, that until he had opened his mind, and laid his proofs in my hand, there would be no rest. I resolved again to waive the point, and begged him to proceed.

"Some months ago," he returned, as he leant against the pier railing facing me, "I was down off Whitstable. We had been sampling the oyster beds, and as we returned, one of those starfish dredgers that work in the Estuary hailed us. We ran alongside and found them lifting a cylinder-shaped stone out of their dredge. It was marked distinctly on one side with the impression of staves, and had on the other the convex form of a cask would throw, but on the other side was a slight depression. It was evident to me from this, that at some time the cement which had formed this stone had been confined in a cask. The wood which had once surrounded it had entirely disappeared; it was now a stone cylinder, green and slimy from long immersion."

"We took the thing on board, and promised to deposit it out of reach of the fishermen's nets. When we reached the pier, I went ashore for an hour, and on my return found the skipper had broken the stone and thrown it overboard. I was much annoyed, for I wished to test the consistency of stone formed by cement alone, as against stone made of mixed sand and cement; this, owing to the man's action, I was unable to do."

"The trouble I made, however, brought a result. At low water the men succeeded in recovering a piece, which they brought to me with the remark 'that the luck of the devil was with them, or every piece would have sunk in the ooze.'"

"The luck of the devil was on our side, Ralston, for within the hollow side of that piece of stone, I found marks which could have come there by no accident—marks which point to a tragedy, at the details of which, at present, I can only guess. The thing was distinct so far as it went; but, although I had the ooze examined, we never recovered any more—all trace of the stone was lost."

"From that day to this the matter has been always present, but as a mystery only. I have searched and probed into the depths, turned incident inside out, and now, at last, I am on the threshold of results. A man will presently be here. He has no knowledge that I have tracked him—he thinks he is coming to me of his own accord—but he is coming, and you will hear."

I knew that it was useless to attempt to carry the conversation farther, for Gaskin had paused with the snap that denoted he had come to the end of his remarks, so I accompanied him up and down the short promenade, outside his room on the pier, in silence, until he resumed.

"Talk about mystery," he cried, as he came to a standstill beside me; "the river is full of it. Mystery is written in every dancing wavelet, in every shoal and mudbank, in every silent anchorage from London Bridge away to where the muddy water turns blue, and the salt of the North Sea dries on your cheek without a stain."

"If the vessels that crawl over the hurrying tide could speak, if the buoys and piers, the solitary lightships, could speak, how the world would stand agape; what a curious history one would have to unfold. Who of us all would believe it possible?"

"There are many incidents," I returned, "which I confess I could not have imagined until you lifted the curtain for me."

"No," said my friend, "I am aware of it. And for that reason I have asked you to meet me here to-night."

"You have heard something definite?" I questioned.

"That goes without saying," Gaskin answered. "My skipper will presently be here with his friend. I fancy you will find him interesting."

Gaskin stopped abruptly. It was easy to see that, despite his unmoved face, my companion was anxious, and ill at ease. I continued, therefore, to walk quietly up and down the balcony, waiting till he should care to resume his remarks.

"Talk about incident!" he exclaimed with some impatience, as he turned again to face the river. "Look at that collier brig lying out there, nearly motionless against the sky-line. You have an imagination, Ralston, and know the sea; picture her out in the North Sea, a gale growing, her canvas clewed up, whanging, stiff with snow. How many poor creatures have been lost from her yards through the infernal parsimony of her owners? Make it a moderate estimate. She is old, and well insured; but the paint smother her sins as the owner's dinner smother the surveyor's conscience. Look beneath. Decaying timbers, rotting shrouds, patched sails, tumbling masts; and all about those rags and ends of service lie the whispering voices of men lost in her defence. How did they go? What love, hate, cruelty, jealousy, revenge, has played about her decks? Ohut! What am I speaking of? It is time, if her owners would make anything out of the final deal, that they sell her to the Norwegians—or—" He paused, looking at me significantly as a knock sounded within.

We stepped through the French window, and found Joey Dismal waiting just inside Gaskin's room.

"Beg pardon' fer interruptin' you, sirs," he remarked slowly; "but I've brought Captin' Maley over, as ordered."

"Thank you," said Gaskin. "Send him in at once, and wait."

Dismal retired, and almost immediately his place was filled by a short, thick-set, grey-haired man of some fifty years; clean-shaved, and wearing the expectant look common to men of his calling. He stood on the edge of the carpet, fumbling nervously with his cap, as he gazed about him.

"Well, Cap'n," said Gaskin, "what can we do for you? Collision, cargo damaged, or gone out short?"

"No, sir," said Maley, with a curious chuckling laugh in which the muscles of his face took no part; "it ain't a queshun of short o' cargo. It's more a case of surpluss. It's a case of grivestones, an' it's a case of—the Lawd alone knows what."

"Come," said my friend, as he rose and turned up the light, "this promises to be interesting. Draw that chair to the table, cap'n, and sit down."

"Thenkin' you, sirs," said Maley, with his slow ghostly laugh, "if it's no odds, I'd raver stand."

"As you like."

"First, sir," the skipper continued, as he glanced at us in turn, "as this here bizness may be all right, an' I've no call to say it's wrong, I want it as you might say, on the quiet. You'll exunge my puttin' it so, sirs, but I'd never have spoke, but it's come to lie that heavy on me mind, that there's not ten hours' sleep in a fortnit, an' my old woman, she grows shockin' in consequence."

Gaskin gave the required promise, and the old man expressed himself content.

"First awfter that, sirs," he continued, as though ticking off the order of speech in his mind, "comes my friend, Captin' William Jenkin. He's retired, got a for-chin lef' him by a brother that went to Ameriker an' tapped ile. Bill an' me were schoolmates, not that I learnt much, but Bill, he took to it better, an' lef' me in the matter o' buke learnin', same as he's lef' me since in the matter o' benkin' accawnt. He's had luck, I've had t'other thing."

"Naa, Bill, he isn't the chap to forget his mate, although he's rich as you like, an' could buy up Tom Maley, bawge, cargo an' all wiv a turn of his pen. No, he's one of the sort as remembers, an' now an' agen, I get a note fer to go up to see him at his house."

"Yaas, it is a house," said Maley as he gazed somewhat disparagingly at the certainly dingy office. "There's no two ways abaout that. Furniter slap up. Glawses all rahnd the walls. Picters—well there, them picters fair make my head ache to look at. Servants—two on 'em, aatside the cook, fine streppin' wenchies wiv bleck gownds an' white aprings, an' floppety streamers abaout their head-gear as would make a man wink to look at."

"Naa, I goes up there, dressed spick an' span as you may believe, fer I don't want to shame me old chum, an' we sit dahn an' have a dinner fit fer a toff. Mybe," said the skipper, quietly looking from one to the other of us, "you've had a dinner like that frequent."

We expressed our appreciation of a good dinner when we could get one.

"There's a scoop," he went on with a gurgle and a tinge of importance, "an' there's fish done up tasty, an' there's a cut off the jint—or may be a dish of chicken, an' there's tawts, an' cold thin's the gells call blermonge, an' then comes the nuts an' wine, an' pears an' grapes. Lawd, fit to make a chap squirm to think of. An' when the wine's on, old Bill, he says, reg'lar as sun-up: 'Wot abaout that lawat grivestone, Tom? Did it slump?'"

"An' I answers him: 'Slump! I should think it did slump; it were heavy enough.' Were it heavy, naa?" says Bill. "Weren't it just, says I; 'I wer afraid the mate 'ud get wind of it, an' think I wer dumin' cargo overside.'"

"Ho! ho! ho!" says Bill, always the same, sirs. "Ho! ho! ho! an' to think uz that's anover stone laid safe!"

"How are these stones given to you?" Gaskin questioned sharply.

"They're not stones, sir; out'ardly they's cement cawks."

Gaskin looked at me significantly, then continued without remark:

"How do you get them to the barge?"

"Mostly, sir, I load up wiv cement in Galley Reach, an' I drop the boat up an' fetch 'em."

"When, and where from?"

"At night time, off a bit of unused wharf, lyin' well up Midend Orick."

"Where does Captain Jenkin live?"

"Woolpack House; away up the hill towards Pevensey. It's a big house standin' in graunds wiv a high wall all rahnd."

"And how are the casks brought down to the wharf?"



We set off to the station

"Mostly old Bill; he sends 'em dahn. That's wot he says, but I believe he brings 'em dahn hisself."

"Why?"

"Because he's so skeary lest anyone should hear of it, an' makes me promise not to let the mate know wot's goin' on."

"Have you taken many of these casks down river?"

"I've took a dozen, if I've took one," said the skipper, as he mopped the perspiration from his brow; "an' they lie all dahn the river from Jenkin seaward. He wanted me to begin lyin' 'em off Muckin', but I says, 'No, you'll be runnin' me foul o' the Thames Conservancy, mate. Lumme! I'll begin outside their demain.' So I stuck number one dahn 'longside the Jenkin buoy, number two's at Nore Middle; then there's one on Spaniard Edge, one off W. Oaze, one at Shiverin' San's, anover at Girdler, two on the Shingles, one on John Knock, an' now he wants me to lie one dahn on Mawgit Hook, an' I'm troubled in me mind as to wever I ought."

"Why trouble after so lengthy a series, Maley; surely one more or less won't hurt you?" said Gaskin as he watched him keenly.

"That's wot I'm coming to, sir. Wiv your leave it's like this. Lawst time I come up river, I get this note. It's from his old woman, whose bed-rid this five year."

He handed Gaskin the note, which ran as follows:

DEAR CAPTAIN TOM.—Do you know why there is always so much knocking in the workroom my husband uses every evening? He is very strange with me; he rarely speaks. I can see there is some mystery connected with that workshop and your visits. The noises frighten me, and my husband's silence makes me anxious. Try to let me know.

Your friend,
MARY JENKIN.

"Naa, what am I to do, sir," said Maley, as he took the note back from Gaskin, and walked a few steps up and down before us. "Lumme! that note's given me the fair hump. I cawn't sleep fer thoughts o' what I may have been goin' on helpin'. Bill's not wot he wer, sirs, he's a trifle off it; touchy on points—you might a'most call him mad, on certain points. Cawn't abear children, ner cats, ner pleccemen. An' now, atop of it all, I get anover note, from Bill hisself this time, an' I'm fair taught in stays as you might say, an' dunno wot to be up to."

The skipper paused in his walk, fumbling in his pocket.

"Let me see the note," said Gaskin.

Maley handed it without a word. It was typewritten, and unsigned.

Come up to-night, Tom. O—— expects you to supper. If a boat was off the pier at H.W. I would meet it sure as guns.

"By this you understand you are to have the boat off the pier at high water. Is that it, Maley?"

"Yes, sir—that's abent it."

"And who is O——?" Gaskin questioned.

"Unless he's alludin' to cawks, I'm suttin' sure I don't know," the skipper returned. "All the letters he's sent run so—printed every one of 'em—just 'uz if I couldn't read!"

"What do you get for your trouble in this matter?" said Gaskin, as he looked him squarely in the face.

The skipper fidgeted a few minutes under his gaze, then turned round:

"Lumme! I knew it 'ud come to that," he cried, "I knew it, same 'uz if I'd heard you ask it before; an' as I'm here tellin' you one part, I may as well tell the other, an' a done wiv it. I get a sovereign, wropped in a' envelope, every time I go up. It comes on with the nuts an' wine, an' I take it. An' that's the trewth, Cap'n Gaskin, sir."

"Then it has paid you pretty well, eh, Maley?" Gaskin questioned, without noticing this outburst.

The skipper writhed a moment, then, standing with arm uplifted, cried:—

"An' if I'd known there's anythin' harmfu' in it, Cap'n Gaskin, d'ye think I'd a took his bloomin' dirt? D'ye think I'd a touched his grub an' his wine, or sot in his easy chairs? Lumme, I'd a-rotted first!"

"I believe you would," said my friend quietly.

The skipper stood mopping at his forehead, growing collected under Gaskin's caressing touch.

"I'm not wot you might call a rich man, Cap'n," he went on extenuatingly; "times are hard, freights want findin', an' I'm no younger than I was; but it haven't come to that, sir. Wot I did, I did fer Bill's sake—to please his whims mostly; fer he says to me one day, 'Tom, those grivestones mawk chapters in my book o' travel. They're finger-postes, stannin' sentry over places wheer I got caught. Some of 'em mawk a wreck, some of 'em mawk simply drivin' ashore, some of 'em mawk the loss o' one of the crew, an' I like 'em to think they're minded.'"

"Then we may take it Captain Jenkin was a bit unfortunate in his navigating days?" said Gaskin, without noticing the old skipper as he stood swaying before us with tremulous voice and earnest gesture.

"Unfortunite! Lawd, 'tain't the word. If there's a pier-end to hit—Bill, he's the chap to find it; if there's a chawnce o' bein' run dahn, Bill's the man that's goin' to get run dahn. Lumme! if that brother o' Bill's hadn't turned up his toes just right fer Bill, Bill 'ud been dahn the cellar long enough, an' wantin' a grivestone hisself."

"Right," said Gaskin, as he drew some loose sheets of paper to him and commenced to write; "now tell me where is the Nase lying?"

"My bawge, sir? Off Kemp's Court."

"Very well; now mark me. It is high water to-night at eleven o'clock. You will, of course, go up to your friend's house as usual, and the boat will be at the pier at the time he mentions; you understand that without any explanation from me?"

"Surelie, sir," said the skipper.

"You will act as you have always done. Take your dinner and your sovereign and get the cask on board, otherwise he may be suspicious. Make no remarks, but get away as early as possible. Where are you bound? And at what time do you start?"

"I'm bound to Mawgit, an' I'd get off as soon after high water as may be; say twelve o'clock. Would that suit, sir?"

"Admirably. We shall meet you before you reach the Nore. But to ensure against any mishap, if the cask is not shipped, telephone to the pier, 'cargo not shipped,' for I do not want to run a wild goose chase down river over your friend's grivestones. There," he continued, handing him written instructions, "I don't think you can make any mistake if you follow that. And now, as I have an appointment, I must say good-night."

Gaskin rose from his seat as he spoke.

"An' you'd not answer the wife's note, sir?" Maley questioned.

"Not under any circumstances. She is bedridden you say? Well you must not see her, or if she forces a meeting keep your weather eye lifting. Don't give her anything, you understand me?"

"Surelie, sir, that's all plain sailin'," said the old man as he moved towards the door; "good-night, Cap'n Gaskin."

Immediately on his departure my friend struck the gong which stood before him on the table, and his skipper entered.

"Look here, Dismal," he said, "I shall require the launch to-morrow morning at five sharp. Call here before you go on board. See the watchman, and find out whether any message has arrived for me. If there is one saying 'cargo not shipped,' come up to my house and let me know. If that message has not arrived, go on board and run the *Vigilante* down to the Medway, and look out for me at Port Victoria by the early train."

"Right, sir."

"Now, Ralston," Gaskin continued as Dismal left the room, "turn out the lights and pipe all hands to dinner, for I am as keen as a wolf. You will come up with me, eh?"

"Certainly, but how on earth did you get hold of that man?"

"There is a regulation providing for a reward to anyone notifying the authorities when ashes or lumber is thrown into the river. I saw the Conservancy,

arranged for secrecy, and for some time have received a report in confidence; and at last, after mutterable delay, [the mate of the *Naze* walked into the trap; he had seen Maley jettison a heavy cask. I paid the reward; it did not come before the Board. Then I handed Maley over to Dismal, who has worked him as we see."

"Admirable!" I interjected, as my friend caught my arm and hurried up the pier.

"You will accompany me?" he questioned, dragging me on. "I intend, for certain reasons, to visit Woolpack House to-night."

"To-night?"

"Why not? I wish to confirm Maley's yarn; there is no other way."

"Then I am with you," said I.

Twenty minutes later

we were seated in Gaskin's dining-room, going but scant justice to the



"The only thing I know," she said quietly, "is the way to the station."

comfortable meal set before us. With the advent of the sweets my friend rose, and begging me not to hurry, departed to prepare for the journey. It was nearly eight o'clock when he returned, wearing a dark military moustache, and dressed in a Norfolk shooting coat, knickerbockers, and gaiters, and carrying in the hollow of his arm a double-barrelled gun. I looked my astonishment.

"Come!" he remarked with decision, "I can see I shall do. Now light up, and get into this coat, for it will be chilly on the Marshes, and come along."

"But why this war paint, Gaskin?" I questioned, as I slipped arms into the Melton he held for me.

"I hope to see friend Jenkin to-night," he returned, "and as he is a river man, and might have seen me during his cruises, I prefer to masquerade as a shootist."

"But what about the birds, or whatever it is the marshes produce?"

"Oh! never mind the game. Men never get anything when they go shooting hereabouts. If they bring any birds home, depend upon it they have subsidised a poulterer."

I said no more. I had seen enough of my friend in his present guise to be able to leave the matter in his hands. So, taking the gun he had provided for me, we set off to the station.

It was a dark but starlight night, when, after an hour's journey over cross lines, we arrived at Midland. A down train was just leaving the opposite platform when we emerged from the station shed to look for a cab, and here our first small difficulty arose. There was but one cab on the ranks, and it was ordered.

"Perhaps," said Gaskin, as he approached the driver a second time and slipped a coin into his hand, "perhaps you could put us in the way of finding a man who can drive us to Almer's Farm, or could drop us yourself at the nearest point?"

"Almer's Farm," cried the cabman. "Ho! that's lucky, sir; it's right in my way. I don't 'ire out fer a 'bus as a rule, but I'm ordered fer Woolpack House, which is a mean job, an' the farm's a mile furdur out. Could you two gents squeeze into the box seat along wiv me? If so, w'y there you are, an' she won't be none the wiser. Right, sirs! Up you jump, then, whiles I put her inside. She's a comin'."

"This is a God-send, Ralston," Gaskin whispered as he climbed beside me.

"Chance," said I.

"There you are wrong, Ralston. There is no such thing as chance."

As this opened a wide field for controversy, under the circumstances I thought it wise to hold my peace, especially as a moment later caddy climbed to the box, and half sitting, half kneeling on the platform before us, started through side streets for the open country.

"You won't let her see them popguns of yours, sir," he remarked as we rattled along. "She have a mortal terror of shooters."

"You seem to know her and her ways pretty well," said Gaskin; "does she often travel?"

"Fer an old un, an' stout—pretty frequent. Say three times a month, an' you won't be a mile out."

"And you always drive her?"

"Bar once or twice when the postcard hev miscarr'd, always. An' a tidy lump she is wiv her basket an' all."

"Basket?" Gaskin whispered; "what for?"

"Markotin' I allow. But I wouldn't give her a chance of seein' you, sirs, it 'ud go aginst me. She is a mighty precocious sort of pesson, an' takes a power of andlin'."

After this we jogged along in silence for some three miles through streets and lanes, then finally entered on a fairly decent road, and Woolpack House loomed dark against the sky-line. Here caddy leant forward to whisper to Gaskin:

"I'm going to pull up 'ere, the crit side blind is down; I'll go to the near winda, then while I speaks to her will you drop off quiet? I couldn't take you to the door, but I'll be back an' pick you up agen in a quarter less than no time."

Gaskin replied silently in the affirmative, and presently as the cab stopped we alid quietly to the ground.

"Curious old chap," I remarked under my breath; "what is to prevent our bolting and leaving him in the lurch?"

"His-ah!" Gaskin replied; "what is that?"

We both held our breath, listening as a smothered cry sounded within the cab. Instantly the window was raised, and the driver went to take the reins.

"What was it?" Gaskin questioned again as he emerged from the shadow of the bushes.

"Cat," said I. "A most unmistakable yowl."

"Think so?" Gaskin queried.

"Aye—don't you?"

But my friend made no reply, he was already busy trampling in a soft stretch of ploughed land that lay beside the hedgeless road.

"Get sportmanlike," he cried. "Turn up your bags and burrow. Although we are birdless, we must not be too clean, or our friend will begin to suspect."

Half-an-hour later Gaskin and I were trudging slowly over the hill from the Marshes below Almer's Farm, drawing towards the high-walled house which lay before us. Fifteen minutes had elapsed since we alighted a second time from the cab, and dismissed the driver with orders to await our coming an hour hence at the place where first we halted.

As we came up the road we discovered a larger gateway, leading through a small shrubbery to the front door of the house. We turned to examine it, and found Maley's descriptive powers had run away with him. It was a good-sized house, but in no sense a large one. Several outbuildings stood on the left, but the entrance was in complete darkness.

Gaskin was passing on, when I pointed out that, although unlit, evidently this was the door.

"I admit it," he replied; "but the door I want is the one through which the woman with the basket vanished. That lies farther down to the left. It is, I suspect, the door whence our friend's casks enter first on their travels."

Walking in silence, we presently passed an angle in the wall, and, hastening on, discovered a second house, or pair of houses which had been converted, standing on the marsh side of the grounds below Woolpack House. Nearly all the windows were in darkness, but a faint light over the door showed a distant gleam, and voices were perfectly audible, as we leant in the porch listening. Someone was playing in the passage.

Gaskin knocked lightly with his knuckles, and after a moment's suspense, the door was opened, and a small girl, a child of some nine years, stood in the gap.

We immediately stepped within, and found ourselves in a fairly roomy, stone-flagged hall, off which several rooms opened. Within the portals of one, two other children stared shyly. The little girl who had opened to us, clutched Gaskin by the arm.

"Please wot do you want?" she cried timidly.

"Whose little girl are you?" he replied gently touching her hair.

"Shut that door! Who told you to open it?" cried a voice, and immediately a buxom female appeared on the scene.

"I beg your pardon," said Gaskin suavely; "I am afraid I am to blame. I found your door ajar, and pushed my way in. I am told Captain Jenkin lives here. My friend and I have been on the marshes, and have lost our way. Can I see the Captain?"

The woman glared at us with a ludicrous expression of fear in her eyes, that scarcely matched her manner.

"Guns!" she cried, then snorting defiance, continued; "No—Captin Jenkin don't live 'ere, an' if ee did, 'ee wouldn't see you. I'd advise you to pack off an' be walkin'!"

"But," Gaskin insinuated blandly, "surely, you will direct us. I am sorry to have disturbed you—I assure you—"

"O'os disturbin' anybody! No-one's disturbed, we ain't so easy frightened, although you've got your guns. Get in, ye little hussy! Don't stand glearin' there!" this to the small child, who immediately hurried away. "An' you, Masters, you'd best be off too, or shall I call the dog. Ho! Rambler—wheer's Rambler?"

A deep-mouthed yelp was the answer, accompanied by the savage tearing at a chain.

"The dog is chained," said Gaskin; "and even if he were not, I am quite sure you will see it would not be wise to set us on our defence. I asked a simple question, can you not answer it?"

The woman stared, then, evidently taken aback at Gaskin's coolness, came to the door and pointed through the darkness.

"The only thing I know," she said more quietly, "is the way to the stachun—it's fower miles, straight up the road, an' I 'ope you may find it."

And with that remark she literally walked us outside.

"Well," said my friend as we heard the door slam, and a sound of vigorous bolting going on within; "if she isn't, as cabby said: 'a most precocious pusson,' I don't know that I have hitherto encountered one. Come, we have what we require. Let us go home."

I needed no pressing, although, I must confess, I thought we had gained little beyond an experience of an extremely disagreeable female. But Gaskin seemed satisfied, and as no two men can command one ship successfully, I left the matter entirely in his hands and continued at his side as quietly as he evidently desired.

Our journey home was long and uninteresting, several times my companion started some outside topic of conversation, and as often relapsed into silence; whilst I, seeing readily that he only struggled to speak for mere courtesy's sake, refrained from giving him reason to continue.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when at length we arrived at my friend's house, and I handed him the unused gun.

"I am afraid you will think me most unsociable, Ralston," he said as we halted before the door.

"Not at all," I returned; "I am quite in sympathy with you, and equally absorbed, pray don't say a word."

"Thanks so much. Then you will come with me to-morrow?"

"I shall be delighted. I wouldn't miss it for worlds."

"Right! 7.30 down train, I will meet you on the platform, and should anything intervene, Dismal shall save you the walk. Good-night."

I was up betimes the following morning, and as Dismal brought no message, I hastened over breakfast and started for the station. Gaskin was already on the platform. He greeted me with a quiet smile, and we entered the carriage he had reserved.

"Everything has gone as I anticipated," he remarked as he closed the window and buttoned his coat close about his throat. "Dismal is a capital fellow—my right hand, in fact. I don't know what I should do without him."

"Have you heard, then?" I asked.

"Yes, he came up to say the cask was safely shipped. And now comes the question, what are those gravestones, Ralston?"

"Some whim of the old man's, evidently," I replied. "He is as Maley said, a bit touchy, probably mad. I see nothing much in it, so far. But you are giving me a run on your launch; the river is my delight. I set aside the possibility of mystery in the certainty of the enjoyment you are providing."

"Awfully good of you to say so, old man," said Gaskin; "and that is your opinion in spite of the 'precocious pusson'?"

"She had a beast of a temper," said I; "but what of that?"

"Did it not strike you there was some reason for that show of temper—that it was perhaps induced by fear?"

"No, I can't say that it did."

"Nor that there were rather a number of children about?"

"Nature abhors a vacuum," said I; "there seemed to be little else about. Truly the poor man has his compensations."

"He has," said Gaskin slowly, as he turned to looked out of the window; "hence these very evident children, and the knowledge that my friend is something of a cynic."

"Men are only cynics," I replied, "if we are to believe a modern authority, 'when they will do good to no one, because they believe everyone past improvement.'"

Gaskin looked round curiously.

"Last night," he said, "you made a remark which I felt inclined to challenge. Another time I will try a fall with you, not now. See, here is the pier, and the *Vigilante* blowing off steam. Hang those engineers, why can't they adjust their fires and save the water?"

A minute or so later the train ran clanking down the wooden pier, and on jumping out we met Dismal waiting at the head of the steps.

Shortly afterwards we were pacing the *Vigilante's* deck, and Gaskin had forgotten the annoyance that he invariably showed, if by any chance the steam roared through the escape pipes unnecessarily.

"You are right, Ralston," he cried; "it is glorious to sniff the fresh sea breeze, and to feel the sting of the salt on one's face. Next to being at sea, I pray always I may have my river. Well, Dismal, what news of the *Naze*?"

"She's lyin' off the Jenkin, sir. We pawed her just as she's bringin' up."

The morning was delightfully clear, a crisp easterly breeze drove up the estuary, carrying a whiff of the wider ocean on its wings, and as we steamed swiftly down the Medway, the spray curled high across the bow, and fell in a mist of rainbow tints to leeward.

In half-an-hour we had rounded the Grain Spit, and were running through the smoother waters of the Swatch. The *Naze* lay just under the tail of the sands, rolling slightly in the swell that drove across them. She was a large, red-sailed, topsail barge; painted black, with a white and green rail. Her stem and bow-board shone in the morning sun, radiant in all the primary colours woven in a pattern of half hoops above the gunwale. Tom Maley stood waving his arm, hailing us to approach as we drew near. Dismal, who had his orders, ran alongside, and beckoning to the mate, ordered him to jump on board as we sprang off, then steamed the *Vigilante* discreetly to gain an offing.

"Sirs," said Maley, as he brought us to the forward end of the hatches and commenced to unlash what appeared to be a heap of tarpaulins, "I've had a queer doin', there's no two ways about that. I row up wiv' the boat early, an' moor her as usual, an' then away across the mawshes fer Woolpack House. I wer' a bit later than usual, an' old Bill, he seems figety an' nervous, like a dawg on a new tarred deck; don't know wheer to sit, or wheer to stand; worse than I've ever seen him before. He wer' glad to see me come in though. I'm certain sure o' that. Glad! 'tisn't the word. An' lumme! here am I playin' the bloomin' monkey on me chum."

"Sirs, it stuck in me froat like a lump o' claggy duff; but I went through wiv it, as I'm bound to. But presently it's clear to me so 'thin's up. Jenkin, he keeps me standin' in the 'all. There ain't no lights, an' then aat comes a femail, a s.r.ppin' piece o' goods as would turn the scale at some sixteen stone, an' that, sirs, as maybe you'll admit, is a tidy lump o' body."

Maley had been busily removing debris as he talked, and now the cask lay uncovered before us.

"She walked straight by me," he went on, as he stooped over the lashings, "same us zif I wer' a parcel o' shakin', an' goes aat of the house. Then Jenkin comes over to me again, an' sings aat fer lights, an' we go in an' have our bit o' dinner. There's so 'thin' wrong wiv' the dinner likewise. 'Taint so hot or so tasty uz Bill's accustomed to, an' he let into them maids hot. Lawd! you should a seen the streamers flyin'; fair dazzin' 'twix, there's no two ways about that."

"Everythin' went uz usual right up to the nuts an' wine; then Bill says: 'Wot about that lawst stone, Tom? Did it slump?' 'Did it slump?' says I. 'Ho, ho, ho!' says Bill, 'an' to think that's another stone laid safe!'"

"But I didn't get away, as usual—there's a hitch somewhere's—an' at lawst I up an' told Bill I'll be missin' the tide if he don't look slippy. Then he fidgets som-

more, an' keeps me till by-an'-bye the maid comes an' whispers to him. Then he jumps up, an' shakes me by the hand, an' says: 'Lawd! am I keepin' you, mate? I clean forgot what time it's high water. Get along, get along.' It's safest by the wharf way, sirs, so I light my lantern and get dahn across the mawshes to the crick."

"The cawsk's lyin' there beside the boat. I see that as I come dahn across the wharf, for the light of a schooner's ridin'-lamp is shinin' full upon it. There's no one about, so I trundle it dahn betwixt the thawts, an' shove off; an' Lumme! so 'thin' else is in the wind!"

"Wot wer' it? Goodness only knows. A noise, a cry, a squeal, so 'thin' singin' natin the bottomo' the boat."

"I stopped pullin' an' listened. There's nothin' to hear bar the suckin' of the water along the reeds as the tide drains over the mud banks. So I pick up me oars, an' jaunt alon' till I fetch the *Naze* an' clamber aboard. The mate's asleep. I don't wake him. I get the cawsk aboard first, an' stow it, then I call him to get under way."

"He's loosin' the brails off the crab ready to drop the mains'l, when that cry comes along the deck agen. 'Wot's that?' he shouts, an' runs aft. 'Trundle this sheet fer'id an' blow quesschuna,' says I; 'we's late.' 'There's a noise, skipper,' he says agen. 'I don't like it.' 'Some stowaway under hatches,' says I; 'get along, we'll look when we're under way.'"

"Haw! an hour later, whiles we're slippin' dahn the foot o' Golley Reach, I lift off a hatch an' let him take a cruise arahnd; but he finds nothin', an' I say nothin'; fer sirs, I'm skeered, I cawn't make it aat either, fer that noise he heard, wer' the same noise I heard when I'm comin' dahn the crick; an' that means—Gawd! wot do I mean, Cap'n Gaskin, sir?"

"Trundle that cask over," said Gaskin, "open it quickly. Man, you should have opened it at once!"



A big black cat burst through the straw, and flying across the deck, disappeared overside.

Maley had already inserted a marlin spike, and was ripping out the chime hoop. The nails were driven in scientifically, the head was put together without a flaw, and a cement factory label lay pasted over all. Suddenly, as we all leant over watching intently, a low muffled cry issued from the cask. Maley dropped the tools and sprang back.

"Lumme!" he cried, "I'm not on it, a job like that!"

"Hand me the tools!" cried Gaskin sharply, and in another minute he had forced the lid.

A vigorous scratching greeted our ears. The sound was unmistakable. Gaskin rose from his stooping posture, and throwing the tools aside, said:

"All right, Maley. You need not be afraid, but if you wish to save it, haul your boat up."

The skipper stared. Then Gaskin gave the cask a kick. There was a loud hiss



A young woman crossing the platform and carrying a baby in her arms.

and a big black cat burst through the straw, and, flying across the deck, disappeared outside with an earsplitting yell.

We stood a moment absolutely dumb, then Maley broke into a loud laugh.

"Lumme!" he cried, choking and spluttering as he jumped into the boat, "that's old Bill all over. Hates cats like pizen. Chucks, who'd a thought it? An' us so cocky." He glanced at Gaskin, who was stooping over the cask, and stopped suddenly.

I had been watching the skipper as he hastily pulled the boat up, and was trying as best I could to conceal my amusement for Gaskin's sake, when I heard a cry, and, turning round, saw my friend tucking a white parcel into the pocket of his coat.

"Avast rowing!" he shouted. "Come back here, Maley, and let the brute drown."

Maley turned about and rowed alongside.

"Jump on board!" cried my friend again. "Fix up this cask with something heavy, and dump it as you were told. Make no remarks. Concoct some lie for the benefit of the mate, and, when you return from this trip, come and see me. Do you comprehend?"

"Sure, sir," said Maley, as he went about his work. "That's all plain sailin', a job like that."

Half-an-hour later we were steaming swiftly up river, and as I walked the deck, sniffing the breeze, Gaskin sat aft, smoking stolidly, immersed in a brown study. I deemed it wiser not to interrupt.

I was comfortably seated in my favourite chair one evening shortly before seven o'clock, when a maid tapped at my study door, and entering, handed me a note.

I took it with some impatience, for I have observed that if ever I am particularly engaged, some interruption is sure to ensue. This feeling soon passed off, however, for, on breaking the seal, I saw the note was from Gaskin. It was brief and to the point, both traits eminently characteristic of my friend.

DEAR OLD CHAP,—Take pity on my loneliness, and come up to dinner. Afterwards I propose a run on the river. The gravestone affair is on the cards. Send a message by Dismal, and don't rig.—Yours,

STANLEY GASKIN.

"Send the skipper to me," I said. "I will give him the answer myself."

The maid left the room, and in a few moments ushered the messenger into my study.

"Well, Dismal," I remarked, as I rose from penning a hurried reply, "how goes the Maley affair; any more notes?"

Dismal looked at me with the ghost of a twinkle in his eyes.

"It's likely there's an over cat's funeral on to-night, sir," he replied, "and we are gain as moakes."

"Then there will be some fun," I returned as I handed him my answer. "Will you give that to Captain Gaskin, and—stay—take a glass of grog before you go?"

Dismal looked lovingly at the liquor stand, but withdrew wiping his lips.

"Thenkin' you all the same, sir, I'd best not."

"I see—well, as you like. But," I added sotto voce as Dismal backed from the room, "when Joey Dismal refuses a glass of grog, I may be fairly confident that there is something in the wind other than mere fun." Half an hour later, I entered my friend's house, and Gaskin hurried into the hall to greet me.

"So glad to see you," he said as he helped me with my coat. "Ount! what slaves we are to fashion. Come in; you know I am glad to see you without any commonplace gush."

I assured him it was impossible for me to imagine anything less flattering, and was going on to explain that I had never settled down in Rilverton, had it not been for his presence; but he stopped me before I had completed half the sentence.

"It is fitting that you should be with me to-night," he remarked as we entered what he is pleased to term his den, "for chapter two is about to commence, and from information I have, I believe we shall not find it uninteresting."

"You recollect," he continued, "what we may term our fiasco of some twelve or fourteen days ago? Well, that put me on my mettle. I determined to get to the bottom of the business, and I have spared neither money nor time to do so. Why? For several reasons. First, and perhaps foremost, because I never allow mere difficulty to deter me. Failure is not written in my 'standing orders,' and because, when on that morning we broke open the cask off the Nore Sands, I discovered a curious piece of evidence. No—I will not now tell you what that was, let it fit into its groove. But whilst I am chattering, dinner is waiting, come along, we will talk and eat at the same time."

He drew me into the dining-room, and presently when the soup was served, continued:

"Three days after Maley returned from his voyage to Margate, he came to see me, and I gave him his orders. He takes now quite a jocular view of the matter, and has unbounded faith in old Jenkin's honesty; and curiously, I am inclined to believe he is right, to a degree."

"Surely," I remarked, "that pulls the house about your ears. Jenkin's being guileless, what remains?"

"The backbone of the whole business, Ralston, nothing less. Jenkin is but a catspaw, a means to an end. Jenkin with his fads, and his half-wit, is an eminently useful person, say to Mrs. Barnes. Take some more soup? No? Then let me fill your glass. You will find this an excellent claret, light and not heady. I object to heady wines myself, a man requires to quench his thirst, not to induce sleep."

"Who is Mrs. Barnes?" I asked as I filled my glass. "Not the 'precurious pusson,' eh?"

"No other, Ralston. My further acquaintance with her came about oddly enough. I had paid several more or less fruitless visits to Midend, when yesterday Maley came round to inform me that he had again been requested to go up to Woolpack House. After seeing him I ran up to Midend once more, completed some inquiries I had in train, and went round to the 'Royal' to order lunch. I then crossed over to the station to interview our friend cabby, who on this occasion also had news to give me. Mrs. Barnes, he said, was going to London; he had just received orders to drive her home. I need hardly tell you that I hastened my lunch in a fashion that quite scandalised the waiter, then paying my bill, hastened to the station.

"The train was on the point of starting, and the ticket office closed, but, luckily for me, they know me at most of the stations between here and London, and the gateman let me through without a word. Help yourself to what you require, and don't wait for me; and," he continued as the maid left the room after removing the fish, "if you don't mind, I will dispense with the girl's services; we can talk more freely alone."

"Pray don't study me," I said; "we have before this dined together out of one mess kid."

"True, Ralston. Those were merry times in spite of what we now call the obvious discomfort of the thing. Gad! who would have believed that you and I would be bothering our heads about quests and literature, at this time of day."

"The generality of men have, like plants, latent properties which chance brings to light," I replied, quoting a favourite. "But please don't call my feeble yarns literature."

"Don't be hypercritical, Ralston," said my friend, avoiding my first remark with fine disdain; "the term covers all reading matter. The mass of it is loved by the British people, the remainder by the critics; who, to be truthful, do not even agree among themselves."

I remained silent. There are several modes of enjoying a man's personality. Gaskin ever appeared to me most entrancing, when engaged in kicking against the ordinary conventions of social life. It was curious to see him now, sitting at the head of his table chatting so readily on different subjects, and to remember, as I did, the time when we both dipped with our forks into a common mess kid, and growled, as all sailors growl, at the consistent nastiness of our provender.

"There was a time when I would have said with you," he went on, breaking in on my reverie; "that Chance was the leading string that brought me again in the way of Mrs. Barnes, but not now. It was Fate. That woman's fate that I should stumble across her rascally villainies; my fate that I should have the *savoir faire* to follow her up. Fate, Ralston, not chance. Destiny knocking at the door, as dear old Stevenson puts it, not Chance."

"But let that pass. I reached the train and at some risk entered a compartment at the rear end, whilst the station men considerably turned the other way. Half-way to London, being in a South-Eastern express, we drew up outside a station and remained some time waiting. The guard alighted and lit his pipe as he chatted with the driver. I did the same and walked to his end of the train. The guard and I were old friends; he accepted one of my cigars, and when we again started, I journeyed in his company and discovered some further facts relating to Mrs. Barnes. The guard had noticed her travelling to and fro, had seen her on the platform at the back of Charing Cross Station, and said much without suspecting he was telling me precisely what I wanted to know. Destiny, Ralston, Destiny knocking at the door!"

He struck the gong as he spoke, and immediately was the quiet, suave host attentive to my wants until the sweets were set and the maid had withdrawn.

"When we arrived at London Bridge, I alighted and, taking up a position just without the van, waited in case Mrs. Barnes should attempt to pass the barrier. Presently another train ran into the station, the passengers who were bound for Cannon Street crossed over and took their seats. Mrs. Barnes was one of them. I confess I was rather nonplussed at this move, for I had made up my mind that Charing Cross was to be the arena on which I met her. Still, I had determined to follow, and having taken my seat in that train, I awaited impatiently the result."

"At Cannon Street she again alighted, I did the same. She crossed to the far platform, passed through the barrier and entered a train for the western terminus. I still followed, at a safe distance, you will understand."

"What could have been her object," I exclaimed as my friend paused, and changing his plate and mine, passed the fruit and wine, "in going through that elaborate programme?"

"Scarcely for nothing, Ralston. I take it, as I am quite sure she had no notion she was being watched, that she desired to pass the time, and when one wishes to elude observation, anything is better than to stand staring at the clock at Charing Cross. May I trouble you to pass the nuts, the wine, I notice, stands with you. No more? My dear fellow, I insist, presently we shall be glad we took it, for the night is raw, and there was a trace of rain in the sky at sunset."

"You may remember," he continued, after filling my glass, "that directly opposite the clock at Charing Cross there is an inquiry office. Here, after a few words with the inspector on duty, I obtained admission, together with the privilege of sitting in a chair before the pigeon hole window. From this position I had no difficulty in following all that took place. Mrs. Barnes had already taken up her

A well-known football authority, under the name of "Leaguester" discusses in the ATHLETIC RECORD the prospects of the clubs in our football coupons.

position under the clock. She had placed her basket on the platform, and now stood with a copy of a well-known weekly paper fully displayed in her hand. From this it was simple to deduce the fact that she waited for a stranger, and before long I found I had not gone far astray in my surmise.

"The time drew on for four o'clock. A 4.10 there is a train due to leave for Midland. And as the hour tolled from a neighbouring belfry I saw that she was becoming fidgetty. Several times she stepped across the platform and glanced up to ascertain the time, then returned to stand motionless as before.

"A suburban train now arrived, and for a few moments it was difficult to follow my lady's movement; but, as the stream of people subsided, I saw a young woman crossing the platform, and carrying a baby in her arms—a veritable bundle of clothes, Ralston—and holding in one hand a copy of the same paper as that held by Mrs. Barnes. There was no doubt about it. It was a signal.

"My pulses leapt. I knew that I had stumbled on the track of one of those awful systems to which our modern civilisation has given birth, and that what I had surmised from the first was correct. It was with the greatest difficulty I kept silence, with the greatest repugnance that I allowed her to complete the transaction, but I required proof, and I sat tight.

"The girl was evidently a person of respectability, her dress, her walk, the manner in which she approached the expectant woman; a halting, nervous, half-frightened manner proclaimed these facts, and also her innocence. Ralston, it cut me like a knife.

"As the two approached," Gaskin continued, after a short pause, "the elder woman folded her paper and returned it to her pocket. The girl's copy fell unheeded to the pavement. Mrs. Barnes then came forward, and glancing at the clock, made some remark which the other answered feebly. They then shook hands, Mrs. Barnes leant forward and peeped at the child, the transfer was completed.

"After a short talk the two women made their way slowly to the barrier, and as they passed, I had a capital opportunity of scanning the face of the younger. It was a good face, Ralston. I judge men and women greatly by their faces, and I tell you this girl's was a good face. Pale, refined, sensitive—broad brow, uncertain chin, dark eyes, clear cut features, the face of a lady.

"Turning, I called to my friend the inspector and asked him whether he had a man whom he could spare. 'I have,' he replied. 'Then send him to me at once.' I begged, 'and with your permission I will give him his instructions myself.' Needless to say, these were simply to follow the young lady and to discover her home, but in no way to molest her, and to communicate the result to me as speedily as possible.

"I then entered the barrier, and as I walked down the platform the girl hastened past me. Her veil was down, but I could see that she was crying. I hurried on. Mrs. Barnes got into one of those open trucks in which suburban Londoners are jostled to and fro to their homes. I took a seat immediately behind her. There was no shifting from train to train on this occasion. Mrs. Barnes sat like the statue of the sphinx, immovable, silent, monstrous, until we arrived at Midland.

"It was now quite dark, and the carriage partially empty, and as I watched her over my newspaper, I saw her transfer the child to the basket. It lay strangely still. There was not a sound, nor any sign of life. The child might have been dead, it lay so still. It may be dead now, Ralston, unless—

"My friend ceased speaking suddenly, and pushed back his chair. I did the same, then following him into the hall, we put on our coats and hastened to the pier.

It was ten o'clock on a moonless night, when at length we started on our strange journey. A mysterious silence hung over the ink-black river, rolling swiftly Londonward. A scintillating glare lay in the heavy clouds, marking the distant city; and all about, on every hand, were the throbbing evidences of river life; twinkling lights, patches of phosphorescent water, gleaming red and green eyes blinking from invisible supports; nebulous piers, chains of wharf lamps, and here and there a shadowy monster, gliding with ghostly hull and hooting siren through the maze of anchored shipping.

A biting wind swept moaning across the Essex marshes. There was a whisper of discomfort in the sullen clouds, and as we swept onwards with a flashing curl of spray about our outwara, a spatter of rain lashed the decks and sent us into the companion for shelter.

"You will have gathered," said my friend as we stood huddled together looking over the half-drawn cowl; "from what I have told you, that there was some reason for our fiasco of the other day, and will doubtless have formed some opinion."

"Indeed it is not far to seek, Gaskin," said I; "evidently our entrance into that house produced it. We alarmed the woman, and she had time to effect a change."

"Aye, Ralston; if we are to suppose that each of the casks Maley has deposited are something more than simple gravestones, then we must accept your theory."

"What have you heard, Gaskin?" I cried, for I perceived from his manner that he was not speaking at random.

"I have heard a curious story, Ralston," he returned; "briefly it is this:

"Years ago when Jenkin was a barge skipper, he married, and for some time affairs went smoothly for him, his wife accompanied him on his voyages, and was I dare say quite happy.

"Seven years went by, there were no children, and Mrs. Jenkin grown weary of her husband's determined ill-luck, frequently stayed ashore. One day Jenkin returned and found the home he had provided, swept and garnished. His wife had disappeared. How or when, no one knew. The neighbours dropped hints, Jenkin struggled in his heavy mulish fashion to solve them and to find her; but nothing came of it. Mrs. Jenkin had died out of his life as surely as though the Thames had swallowed her.

"Five years passed. Jenkin grew suddenly wealthy and threw up the sea to settle down at Midland, where he married again. His second wife was undeniably pretty and was considerably his junior. Evidently she was attracted by the man's wealth, for, I give you my word, Ralston, a heavier, duller-witted bargee I have never encountered in my experience, than is her husband.

"Mrs. Jenkin number two faded as Mrs. Jenkin number one had faded, only in a

different fashion. She grew weak from no apparent cause, and some six years after her marriage became, as you remember, the bed-ridden dame of Maley's story. And now mark what follows:

"Two years ago a notorious baby farming case came before the courts, but one of the women implicated, not only was never brought to justice, but actually succeeded in entirely escaping the vigilance of the police. She disappeared; her haunts, her friends, her enemies, knew her no more. She had vanished, but, at about the same time, the house at the foot of Jenkin's grounds became tenanted.

"This fact was sufficiently curious to set me thinking. I followed up thought by inquiry; I verified it at an agency at Midland; I verified also something more startling. Two years ago Jenkin's wife received a shock. Two years ago he took a queer abhorrence of cats; he lay in wait for hours to seize upon some stray prowler in his grounds. The blacksmith contrived traps for him; he caught these cats and shipped them down river in remembrance of his past mishaps. A curious craze, Ralston, hinging certainly on lunacy. But to what end is all this circumstance tending? Wait. I will tell you.

"There is certain evidence here that someone tampers with this man's handiwork. Remember the animal that escaped, it was alive. Jenkin invariably shoots his cats with an air gun.

"Further. About this time a cooper employed at a near cement factory began to supply this man with casks and stolen labels. About this time cement in sacks was sent, not to Woolpack House, but to the smaller houses through the same agency. Jenkin's conduct grew stranger than ever. Besides Maley, another skipper was called in to assist in laying these 'In Memoriam' tablets. They deposited them down river. Why? What was there to hide? What is at the back of all this misery? Why is Jenkin the mumbling idiot he is?"

"Heaven knows!" I replied, amazed at my companion's vehemence, and his abrupt conclusion.

"Because," he returned slowly; "Mrs. Barnes is the missing baby-farmer, and because Mrs. Barnes is also Mrs. Jenkin number one."

I stood silent, appalled at the vision that lay unfolding in my mind.

"And," Gaskin continued solemnly; "when I tell you that the thing I discovered in the cask the other day, was a baby's garment, you will, I think, begin to understand."

"Good Heavens! Are you sure?" I gasped.

Gaskin shrugged his shoulders.

"Presently," he returned, "we shall see, for to-night I am about to search the house at the foot of Jenkin's grounds. The men are doubtless now filtering into the neighbourhood, and Maley's boat is waiting only for high water in the creek."

"That is at 11.15?" I questioned.

"There or thereabouts."

I took a few turns up and down the deck watching the swirling, ink-black river. The rain had ceased, but the sky still hung heavily lowering. We had made good progress; out in the distance I could see the lights on the training ships lying off Abbeyville, a cluster of smaller fry, and the twinkling light on Dazzling Point. Gaskin presently joined me, and, taking my arm, accompanied my short promenade. "Ralston," he said very slowly, "is this thing Chance? Has it come into my hands through that puny element you term Chance?"

I walked in silence. In truth the hand of God lay in every turn. The finger of God, pointing through the darkness, loomed distinctly in my mental vision, but I was silent. I would not speak. I preferred to listen.

"Fate, Ralston. Destiny knocking at the door. Remember also these lines:

"We are but as the instruments of Heaven,
Our work is not design, but destiny."

"The subject is hemmed with difficulties," I rejoined; "one cannot argue them just now."

"For a sailor," said Gaskin, "you are singularly unsympathetic; fancy a sailor not admitting the hand of God!"

With this he turned and went below, whilst I slowly paced the deck until we had passed a cluster of shipping anchored just below the creek, and Dismal rang the engines to slow speed. Immediately Gaskin returned, and, standing beside the steering screen, gave the skipper some orders in a low voice.

For a short while we steamed quietly amidst a score of anchored vessels. One lying fronting the entrance to the creek attracted my gaze; two lights hung on her bow-board near the water line. Dismal made directly for them, slowed, stopped, and flung a line on to her quarter.

It was the *Naze*.

"Cap'n Maley on board?" cried Gaskin.

"Sir," returned a shadowy figure in the gloom, "Cap'n Maley's ashore."

"All ready, Griggs. Jump into your boat and lead the way."

Apparently the mate had only waited this order, for in another minute we heard the splash of oars as he sculled towards the creek. Then our boat was hauled up, and Gaskin and I, together with Dismal and one of the hands, took our places and followed silently shoreward.

Except for the lights about Galley Reach Tavern there was nothing to guide us, and when these were passed the creek rolled as silent as the grave. The wind swept over the dank marshland, and whispered amidst the tall reeds which line the succulent ooze, skirting the sodden soil. Now and again Griggs paused, and suffering his boat to drift with the tide, prodded the water to find his position. Once he stuck on a tongue of mud that lay across the creek near a bend, and his low cry of warning gave us time to back astern and avoid a similar fate. Then we all swept onward, until drawing abreast a small and lonely wharf, Griggs pulled alongside, and left us to drive on without a sound.

Presently we reached a half loaded barge lying some little distance further up; and here, silently as though we were a pirate crew about to engage on some perilous encounter, we secured the boat, and scrambling to the wharf, hastened to our rendezvous.

It was curious to glance round and mark the different bearing of the men; Gaskin, cool, decided, ready for any emergency, standing in absolute silence in the shadow of a tumbledown shed; Dismal, evidently bubbling over with excitement; the stolid mate, and our still more stolid "hand," all clustered together out of the glare of the solitary oil lamp, whispering their comments on the Guv'nor's craze.

It was a strange scene, and one that I shall not easily forget. The mysterious casks, those gravestones marking chapters in Jenkin's book of Travel; again I heard the words: "They're finger-posts stan'nin' sentry over places wheer I got caught. Some of 'em mawk a wreek, some of 'em mawk simple drivin' ashore,



"Stand! In the Queen's name!"

some of 'em mawk the loss of one o' my crew, an' I like 'em to think as they're minded." The words rang in my brain as I pictured Maley standing in the office that night a fortnight ago, and I could see the grey-headed old man as he swayed slightly, emphasising his speech. And on the heels of that memory came Gaskin's rasping utterance: "There was no sound or any sign of life. The child might have been dead, it lay so still; it may be dead now, unless—" The voices ceased. Some marsh birds started far beyond our vision, flew shrieking overhead. The heavy air swept past us, chilling us to the bone, and the moisture from the roof fell slowly.

Drip—drip—drip.

I counted the falling drops, fascinated by the appalling silence. Fifty had fallen. Gaskin moved slightly, the drops were now splashing on his shoulder. I began to count again, and paused. A new sound had grown into the night, and the thread of the reverie snapped.

Crunch—crunch—g-r-r-r-r—crunch—g-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r.

I looked round hastily. A burly figure, come from the distant marsh-path was trundling a barrow cautiously over the short roadway leading to the wharf.

"A fat bloke that," said Dismal in a hollow whisper to his mate. "Blowin' like a grampus, he is."

"Yass, take's his glawss o' four ale, he does."

"His-s-t!"

A low warning cry came from the shed corner, and a figure I had not hitherto noticed stepped forward. Gaskin accompanied him.

"Stand! in the Queen's name!"

The figure stopped. A wavering cry of terror rang through the night, and he of the grampus-like breath was a prisoner. Several lanterns now flashed into the darkness. I pressed forward. Gaskin rose to his feet and caught my hand.

"Safe, Ralston!" he cried. "Mrs. Barnes will trouble the world no more with her villainies."

"What do you mean?"

"Look."

"Great Heavens!" I cried: "it is Mrs. Barnes."

"The chaps wi' the guns!" she replied, as standing clad in man's attire she glared sullenly at me. "The chaps as want to know wheer Captin Jenkin lives. Yah! Spies, dirty, filthy spies!"

"Hold her, lads!" cried Gaskin sternly; "see she does not escape."

With this he and the rest of us seized the cask and commenced the work of opening it, whilst the woman stared impassively at our movements, perhaps the coolest individual of the company. It was a time of awful suspense. Instinctively my thoughts raced back to the former occasion. Then we were standing on the deck of a rolling barge, watching keenly as now, but daylight nerved us, the breath of the ocean was in our nostrils, now it was dark, and the night in keeping with the stealthy operations we had come through. The moaning wind, the flashing halo of light, the outer darkness, the whole scene weird uncanny. Hark!

Gaskin was tearing the lid apart.

"Stand back!"

The cover fell with a clang at our feet. The cask was heavy, someone went behind and tilted it. Cement rolled out, straw stopped the way. Dismal removed this also, then halted, stung by dread. What is it? "More cement, sir—an' something soft!" Out with it? What is it? No need to ask. A canvas package, long, narrow, weighty, limp.

"Stand back, men!"

Gaskin and the police officer knelt in the hollow circle of light, ripping with their knives at the stitches. Then my friend arose.

"Dead, Ralston! Dead, and so dying all around us every day!"

It was Gaskin who spoke as he leant heavily on my arm. We stood spell-bound until a harsh voice leapt into the night. "Died o' hoopin'-cough, all fair an' nateral, Masters!" And the material world rolled once more in view.

"I warn you," cried the police officer, rising to face her, "that anything you may say will be taken in evidence against you."

"Garn!" she shouted spitefully; "you may put it along wi' yer dirty clothes in the washtub!"

"Come!" cried Gaskin, turning sharply round; "bring her with you, and get along to the house."

We started immediately, leaving three men to convoy the woman. The way was long, and the path difficult to discern. Midway on our journey we espied a light approaching slowly. Maley carried it; he was going down to the creek in the full tide of conscious repletion, carrying his sovereign and his dinner with the air of a man who is certain of his honesty. He sprang to attention on seeing us.

"Cap'n Gaskin, sir!" he cried, "it's all right, old Bill, he's given me the office, the cawak'll be ready fer you as I said."

"That is all right, Maley, I have altered my plans. Come back with us, I am going to the house."

"But, sir, I'll be missing the tide."

"Never mind the tide."

Not another word was spoken. Maley followed without remark until we had climbed the sodden track, and stood before the lower house; here he interposed:

"Beggin' your pardin, sirs," he cried, "but this ain't the house: Jenkin's house lies furdur up, away behind that wall."

"I know it," said Gaskin, "go and fetch the old man here."

Maley departed, and we stood knocking at the door. But there was no answer, the house was dark and silent as the sodden marshland whence we had emerged. After waiting a short while, Gaskin called us to help him, and in a few moments, under our united pressure, the flimsy fastenings were torn asunder, and the door flew open.

A shivering child of some twelve or fourteen years approached us, as we filtered through the darkness into the grim stone hall. She was screening a candle, and shivering with cold and fright.

"Oh, please, wot do you want?" she cried in quick earnest entreaty. "Oh, mother'll give it to us! Oh, please to go away!"

"Mother will trouble you no more, little woman," said Gaskin quietly. "Come, Dismal, let us have more light and follow me."

He took the candle from the child, and together we hurried upstairs. There were six rooms, all in darkness. Three entirely bare, the others containing three rickety beds and a scant allowance of furniture. Eight wan children slept in huddled bundles amidst the rags in two; they awoke on our entrance and screamed with fright despite our attempts to quieten them. One room stood vacant, and on the floor beneath the window, two smaller children moaned restlessly. They were quite young, babies in fact, and the sobbing iteration of their cry, told of long and weary prayers for food and care.

Gaskin turned away, the horror of what we had seen written strong on his face. As for me my voice stood still and a sense of agony shook me, as bending down I strove to soothe the wailing voices; for here, amidst this bundle of humanity, lay the baby waif from Charing Cross.

My eyes were dim when following my friend, and the now awestruck Joey Dismal, I passed downstairs and commenced with them to search the lower rooms.

It was as Gaskin had surmised, a pair of houses thrown into one. The partition

wall on the ground floor had been removed, and a beam, supported in the centre by a solitary post, upheld the rooms above.

A piece of rope fastened into this post by a stout iron staple attracted Gaskin's attention. He was stooping to examine it, a curious dread depicted on his face, when the child who had been talking with a policeman approached. She was tearless now, but shivering with the cold.

"That's where she ties 'em up, sirs, w'en they're not good," she whispered in elfish glee at discovering the opportunity of talking without fear of consequences; "an' sometimes she beats 'em there. O my gracious!"

She sucked in her lips at the recollection and her teeth chattered.

"I was certain of it!" cried Gaskin sternly; "and what are you, my child?"

"Me? Oh! I elps 'er do the work an' sich. But, sirs, you won't say nuffin, she's a 'ard un, that's what she is."

We gave the desired promise, and continued to overhaul the lower rooms until Maley returned with Jenkin. Gaskin immediately beckoned us into the front where a brilliant light now shone. Dismal alone remained hunting about the back premises.

Captain Jenkin confronted us with a stolid stare of amazement on our entrance.

"I weren't aware as Mrs. Barnes had friends," he remarked slowly, then turned to whisper to Maley.

"There is no such person as Mrs. Barnes," said Gaskin in his harshest manner. "Mrs. Barnes is Mrs. Jenkin, and you know it!"

Jenkin looked at his inquirer in a dazed fashion for some moments, then replied huskily:

"Sir, I do know it. 'Eaven fergive me, it's bigamy."

"There is something worse than bigamy behind it, Jenkin," Gaskin continued sternly.

A smile of infinite cunning crept into the skipper's eyes. The man was utterly changed. He leant forward chuckling grimly, and calling to Maley:

"Did it slump?" he questioned. "Ho, ho, ho! Did it slump, Tom Maley?"

Then, noticing Maley's look of fear, he continued in vigorous explanation: "The souls of dead sailor men come creepin' slow about a man!" he cried, with gradually increasing vehemence. "Tom, I talled you that before. What do they want. Gawd! I were unfortunat', I drowned 'em, an' they're askin' me fer burial. But you cawn't bury a soul, Tom Maley, an' you must bury somethin'. What's to be done? I didn't know how to work it, till one night I'm sittin' in the dark, thinkin'—thinkin'—an' then Bob Stafford, him that's lost off the tops'l yard when I'm comin' up the Deeps, he pointed the way."

"Bob lies down beside the cat on the hearthrug, Tom, an' when I look agen, he's gone. Gone, Tom Maley, like the devils in the Book, that entered into a herd of swine. Then I know, Tom Maley, what Bob Stafford meant, for when I come to stroke the cat, the sparks fly wild."

"I buried him, Tom. You took him down, an' you telled me he slumped! Ho! ho! ho! Bob Stafford rests quiet now; but there's others."

He paused, and passed his hand across his forehead.

"Who are these men?" he cried, with a desperate effort at remembrance; "and wheer is Mrs. Barnes?"

"Bring her in," said Gaskin quietly.

A man passed from the room, there was a slow shuffling of feet, then the woman entered, held fast in the grip of the police. Jenkin started and gasped for breath.

"Lizzy," he groaned, "what does it all mean?"

"It means," came my friend's rasping utterance, "that Mrs. Jenkin is a murderess! She has substituted the bodies of children for your cats, and Maley and Dan Cooper are implicated with yourself in the crime."

Jenkin wavered ominously, and, glancing at the woman's face, strove to read an answer; then starting forward, as his eye caught sight of the miserable package lying limp on the floor, he tore aside the canvas covering.

"What does it mean?" he mumbled in slow, heavy speech. "Lizzy! O my Lawd!" The body lay disclosed to view. "Sirs!"—he struggled to his feet, and hurled the men aside who attempted to hold him—"sirs, it's dead!"

"Died fair an' nateral," cried the woman; "o' hoopin'-cough it died."

"We discovered it in the cask," said Gaskin; "Mrs. Barnes placed it there."

"The cask! the cask!" Jenkin gasped, an awful, witless expression again leaping to life. "Did it slump, Tom Maley? Ho, ho, ho! Did it slump? Why?"—his voice rose to a shriek as he stood struggling for breath—"why? Because that case held—Bill Sterry's soul! He was fer burial—an'—you've taken—it away! Let—me go! Tom Maley, let—me—go!"

The man's voice died in an impotent whirl of words. He struck out desperately, then staggered and fell heavily to the floor.

We rushed to his assistance; but a thin, dark stream issuing from between his clenched teeth told us what had happened. The old skipper had followed in the wake of those drowned souls whose shadows had haunted him so long.

I have roamed the wide river on many occasions with my friend, but in my memory no occasion equals that of our mysterious trip in the grey hours shortly before dawn, on the night following our adventures at Woolpack House.

Only once Gaskin broke the silence.

"The man was honest," he cried vehemently, "but had a madman's craze. In all else he was sane. But the police held other views, and to test them I agreed to confront him with the evidence. Fatal pandering to the dictates of humanity. I knew he was honest. Now they know it too. But up in Woolpack House a bedridden woman mourns the loss of her husband, and has received an answer to her letter."



We rushed to his assistance.

WHAT I SAW IN THE CHURCHYARD.

A - CHRISTMAS - STORY.

By John K. Leys.

CHAPTER I.

THE SUMMONS.

"Come to me, Mary, as soon as you possibly can. My position here is very strange. I am alone, and need your help greatly. Come to-night if possible. Old Manor House, Tranmere, Ribston, Hants. Nearest station, Tranmere Pool. Don't fail me. Lily Haldane."

I sat with this telegram open before me in my fireless room. If I had not had occasion to run up to my lodgings in the middle of the day—a thing I very seldom did—I should not have got the message in time to go down to Hampshire that day.

I scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry that I had not missed it; for although I was ready enough to go anywhere for Lily, I did want to be in London over Christmas day. Tom had been at sea since February, but he had promised to be back on Christmas Eve. And this was Christmas Eve! I had been counting the days for months; and it was hard to be called away just on Christmas Eve! To be sure, I scarcely expected that Tom would be able to keep tryst with me; for his last letter had been very short and hurried, and he had not spoken of sailing for England. Only, if by some miracle he did turn up, how sadly disappointed he would be to find me gone! What a dismal Christmas day it would be for both of us!

Still, I did not like to refuse Lily. For twelve months she had been my special chum and room-mate, and for working girls in the seething whirlpool of London life that means a great deal. I could hardly think that she was in any real danger; but she was evidently unhappy, and needed me, and I could not bear the idea of disappointing her. There was nothing for it but to go.

Springing from my chair, I hunted up an old Bradshaw, and found that by making all the haste I possibly could, I might just catch the two ten from Waterloo. I put the telegram into an envelope, and directed it to Tom Halliford, as the best and quickest means of explaining my absence, in the unlikely event of his turning up next day. I crammed a few clothes into my trunk, and put one or two necessities into a handbag. A cab was fetched, my letter to Tom was confided to the care of my landlady—and I was off.

I had had no lunch, so I was forced to stop at a baker's shop to get some rolls and buns to eat on the way. I would have missed the train had it not been Christmas Eve. There were crowds of passengers, heaps of luggage, and consequently many delays. I got a seat in a compartment that was all but full. It was no time to choose one's carriage.

Sitting nearly opposite me was a young man, who, at first sight, aroused in my maiden breast the sentiment of intense dislike. He was, I think, the very fattest man, young or old, I ever beheld; and though a stout middle-aged or elderly man is tolerable, a stout young man is my peculiar abhorrence. Not only was this young man very stout, but he had a gross, self-satisfied air that was highly objectionable. To crown his disagreeable qualities, this young man seemed to think he had a right to use his eyes—they were half lost in his fleshy face—as much as he chose. He kept staring at me in the most offensive way for the greater part of an hour.

The train stopped somewhere, and I would have changed my carriage but for the sight of some travellers who were rushing up and down the platform, trying apparently in vain, to find seats. A man came round examining our tickets, and when he saw mine he called out to me.

"Change at Ribston for Tranmere Pool."

To my intense annoyance, the stout young man bent forward and said to me with a patronising, protecting air:—

"I'll see you right, miss. I'm going to that part of the country myself."

I could not say that his manner was uncivil, and the offer was one that, coming from anyone else, I would have been grateful for; but it was an effort even to give him a cold word of thanks. I may as well say a word now about Lily Haldane.

She was a motherless girl, whom I first met in the waiting-room of a London newspaper office. We took a liking to one another at first sight, and meeting again a few days later an acquaintance had been struck up between us which soon ripened into friendship. She told me that after leaving school she had lived quietly, if not happily, at the Old Manor House with her father, who was a miller and grain merchant, in rather a large way of business. Her father, I gathered, was not very affectionate, but was not positively unkind to her.

At the end of the year, a certain Uncle Richard made his appearance at the Old Manor House; and then Lily's troubles began.

This Uncle Richard was her father's brother, and had at one time been in partnership with him. They had quarrelled, years before, and Richard Haldane had gone to the States. He had now come back with very little money, and accompanied by a grown-up son. The two seemed to think they had a natural right to quarter

themselves upon their relatives as long as it suited their convenience, and they settled down at the Manor House, as much at their ease as though they had bought the place.

Lily would have had no special objections to their presence had it not been for two things—Edward Haldane, Lily's father, seemed to be falling more and more every day under the influence of his brother Richard, who, for his own ends, used to pander to his brother's weaknesses, especially his miserly love of gold. This was bad enough; but it became much worse when Sam Haldane, Uncle Richard's son, began to make love to Lily in such a way that she could not escape his attentions. She at last threatened to complain to her father, and did so; but he was so besotted with his money-grubbing, and so completely under the influence of his brother, that he merely laughed at her, told her that Sam was a good-looking fellow, and would make her a great deal better husband than any fine city chap would do. The end of it was, that after some months of misery, Lily left home and came up to London. She had a ready pen, and after the usual struggle she managed to get enough of work to support herself. She wrote to her father regularly, but never had so much as a line from him in reply.

On the 20th of December I noticed an advertisement addressed to "Lily H." in a morning paper. It had been inserted by a lawyer who lived at Ribston, who had often done business for Mr. Haldane. He did not know Lily's address, and had been forced to take that way of informing her that her father was dead, and that in his opinion she ought to go home without delay. She started at once; and this telegram was the first news I had had from her since she left London.

At Ribston I had to change for the small branch line that ran down to Tranmere Pool.

I managed to escape from the attentions of my objectionable fellow passenger on the platform; but he found me out after I had seated myself in a carriage of the local train, and coolly entered the compartment. It was impossible to avoid him. All I could do was to hope and pray that we might not be left alone in the carriage.

The train had scarcely started, when he tried to enter into conversation with me, saying that he like myself, was going to "The Pool," as the country people called the village, and that he would be happy to guide me to the house I was going to.

I thanked him, and said that I would not trouble him, as my friends would be sure to send to meet me.

To my dismay, however, when I reached the dismal, rain-sodden platform that formed the station at Tranmere Pool, I saw no sign of any messenger, and the inquiries I made of the solitary porter resulted in nothing. All he could tell me was that the Old Manor House was more than three miles off, and that it was impossible for him to spare the time to show me the way, as his mate was "taken bad," and he could not leave the station. There was no conveyance of any kind to be had; all I could do was to listen carefully to the directions given me, and set out at once.

CHAPTER II.

IN TRANMERE CHURCHYARD.

THE night was intensely dark; it was just possible to see the hedges on either side of the narrow lane. It did not rain, and for that I was thankful; but at intervals there were showers of sleet or snow that melted, in spite of the cold, as soon as it fell.

As I struggled on, the wind rose, and whistled through the leafless hedges with a constant wailing dirge that bred in me all sorts of mournful, melancholy thoughts. Not once did I meet a soul—everybody was at home preparing for Christmas. I did not even come to a roadside cottage.

As I went on, the lane became narrower, till it was little more than a bridle path; and when I had walked for perhaps half an hour, I came to a place where the road forked. I had not been told of this. Which path was I to take? There was no sign-post, and it was far too dark for me to have read the lettering on it if there had been one. Seeing that it was a mere matter of chance, I kept to the right. And from that moment I felt as if I had lost my way.

Whether I had or not, it seemed to me that the way was quickly losing itself. The hedges dwindled and disappeared. I was on an open common, over which the wind came screaming in angry gusts. And now, to my horror, the snow began to fall. The whirling snowflakes bewildered me, and settling on my neck and hair—for it was impossible to keep an umbrella up—added to my wretchedness.

After all, the common was a small one, or I had only been crossing a corner of it, for a quarter of an hour's walking brought me to some fields; and by good luck I hit upon a field path that ran through them. "Now," I said to myself, "I must come to a farm, and if they will take me in, I will stay all night, for my strength won't hold out much longer."

Before long something big, some building, loomed before me out of the darkness. But it was not a farm-house; it was a church. A few more steps brought me to the



I noticed an advertisement addressed to "Lily H." in a morning paper.

churchyard wall. There was a stile, and the path seemed to lead through the churchyard. I thought I had better follow the path, because, I said to myself, the path must lead somewhere; I have only to stick to it, and it is sure to bring me to a house. Then, if they can't take me in for the night, I will at least be able to ask my way.

The churchyard was a very old one. It was so full of graves and tombstones that I stumbled over them continually, as I made my way slowly to the church porch. I knew that I would find a good path leading from the porch.

Suddenly a gleam of light shone in the windows of the church. It darted this way and that once—twice—shone steadily for a few seconds, and then disappeared.

The thing was so sudden, so mysterious, so noiseless, that for a moment or two I shook with fright. I could do nothing but stand still and look, waiting for the light to re-appear. But it did not.

"How silly I am!" I said to myself. "It is the sexton with a lantern. Most likely he is cleaning up the church for the Christmas services. I will go and see if the church door is open."

I went up to the porch, but the church door was fast. And the windows showed no gleam of light. The only way I could account for the light I had seen was that it must have been displayed on the other side of the church, shining through the windows on both sides of the nave. Accordingly I made my way round the tower, and reached the other side. But all was in darkness. I called out—"Is anybody there?" and the next moment I all but tumbled over the edge of what looked like a deep pit, close to the wall of the church. I just saved myself by clinging to part of an iron railing. The rest of it had apparently been broken away, or had been removed.

Soon I made out a flight of steps, and at the bottom of them a dark, cavernous kind of place, leading, I supposed, to some place of burial. As I peered over the edge into the thick darkness below, a slight sound—the metallic ring of iron striking upon stone, but very subdued and faint, seemed to come from the vault below me. I called out again—"Is anybody there?" but receiving no answer, I determined that I had done all in the way of investigation that self-respect required, and that I was at liberty to make my way out of the churchyard as soon as I pleased.

I turned about, and coming to a broad path I ran down it at my top speed, till I came to the main gate of the churchyard.

I had just passed through it when a furious storm of hail came pelting down, and I was glad to stand back under the shelter of a thick yew tree that stood close to the gate.

In ten minutes or less, the shower was over, and I was about to go on my way, when I heard the sound of footsteps close to me on the other side of the wall that separated me from the churchyard. I crept a little closer under the shadow of the yew tree, meaning to remain where I was till the men, whoever they were, should have gone by. I did not care to appeal for guidance to men who had refused to answer when I had called to know if anyone was in the vault.

"What time are the bloomin' carts to be here?"

The voice sounded almost at my ear; and it was the voice of the objectionable, fat young man! I crouched down on the ground, and hid my white face in my arms, hoping that in the darkness they would go by without seeing me.

"The carts? Five in the morning."

This time it was the voice of an older man. It was hoarser, rougher, and thinner than the other.

"Why can't we start before that?" demanded the first speaker. "People will be moving about by six."

"Do you suppose I'm as big a fool as you are?" growled the older man. "The police would stop us if we were to travel at night."

The younger man said something in reply, but I did not catch his words. They had passed on without noticing me. After waiting a few minutes I followed them.

I was now on a good road, and I made better progress. But I had to walk half a mile before I came to a cottage. There I learnt that I was not far from the old Manor House, and I walked on with fresh vigour.

Another quarter of an hour brought me to a pair of rusty iron gates, with tall brick pillars flanking them. On one side was a smaller gate through which I passed and found myself in a grass-grown avenue.

It now began to snow, but I cared little for that, seeing that I was almost at my journey's end. The avenue, though intensely dark, was not a long one; and I soon came in sight of what looked in that dim light an immense house, standing gaunt, naked, and dark, in the tempestuous night. From all the scores of windows that must have faced me, there was not a glimmer visible.

It was with a beating heart that I lifted the knocker and let it fall—once, twice. The next moment there was a rush of flying feet, and Lily's voice called to me through the door. I answered her. Then there was a shout of joy, rapid undoing of bolts, the screaming of a rusty key in a worn lock, and I was in my dear friend's arms.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT WE FOUND IN THE CELLAR.

SHE took me to a small room at the back of the house, where there was a big fire, and a kettle singing on the hearth.

As I was engaged in taking off my wet things, Lily opened a cupboard, and taking out a couple of chops and a small frying-pan, she brought them to the fire and began to cook the chops.

"You won't mind my having no servant, Mary?" she said.

"Do you mean to tell me that you are all by yourself in this immense house?" I asked with a stare of amazement.

Lily nodded.

"That was one reason I was so anxious for you to come," she said. "It was impossible to get a servant here just now, when everybody wants to be at home; and Mr. Beverley thought it was necessary that I should stay in the house myself."

"Who is Mr. Beverley?"

"The lawyer—papa's lawyer, who advertised for me, you know." I nodded, and she went on.

"Uncle Richard has behaved in the strangest way; and if it had not been for Mr. Beverley, I don't know what I should have done. My uncle would not let me into the house. He said my father had left it to him by will, but when Mr. Beverley asked him to produce the will, he said it would be time enough after the funeral. Mr. Beverley threatened him with all sorts of things, but it seemed that my uncle being in possession, it would require an order of some court to expel him, and it would take weeks to get that."

"And where did you stay all this time, my poor dear?"

"At a little inn at Tranmere Pool. I could not stay with Mr. Beverley; as he is a bachelor. But I was going to tell you. What made Mr. Beverley so anxious about my uncle's conduct was this. You know my father had some mills, and a large grain business. Well, when Mr. Beverley, acting for me, inquired of the manager, old Mr. Pillet, how things stood, the poor old man, almost in tears, said

that everything was going to ruin—that for months past my father had drawn out of the business every week as much gold as he could lay his hands on, and never brought any of it back."

"Gracious, Lily, how strange! What did he do with it?"

"Brought it home to this house, and boarded it. At any rate it never found its way back to the office, and often Mr. Pillet thought he would be forced to stop payment, in spite of my father being a wealthy man, for want of ready money."

"My father was always fond of hoarding, but it is plain that since I left home he had become much worse. I have no doubt my Uncle Richard encouraged him in it."

After tea, a clock in the corner struck eight. I could scarcely believe that it was so early. The night had been a long one for me.

As we sat over the fire, listening to the swish of the snow against the window panes—it was snowing now in good earnest—Lily went on with her story.

"It was not till the day poor papa was buried that I was allowed to come into the house. By that time he was in his coffin—I could not see him."

"I would have made them open it!" I exclaimed.

Lily shook her head.

"There was a leaden coffin that my uncle had ordered down from London out of



"Good gracious, Lily!" I cried, starting to my feet in a fit of uncontrollable excitement.

respect to papa, he said. And they told me it was not practicable to open it. I had to give in. I insisted on being present at the funeral. Only Mr. Beverley was with me. It took eight men to carry the coffin downstairs."

"Never mind telling me any more about that just now," I said hastily, seeing that these painful details were not fit for the girl to dwell upon upon. "Tell me where you found the money."

"It is not found yet."

"Not found yet! Then your uncle or your cousin has stolen it!"

"No; unless it was stolen in my father's lifetime, which is not likely. Mr. Beverley says there must be several thousands—I think he said many thousands—of pounds in gold hidden away; and he got the police to keep a watch at the gate ever since papa's death, to see that nothing was carried away. Mr. Beverley told me to-day, that although, of course, a part may have been stolen, he does not think it possible that the bulk of the gold could have been conveyed away without its being noticed."

"Good gracious, Lily!" I cried, starting to my feet in a state of uncontrollable excitement. "Do you mean to sit there and tell me in cold blood that there is a buried treasure of nobody knows how many thousands of pounds in or about this house—within a few yards of where we stand, only waiting for you to dig it up?"

"Yes, that is what it comes to, I suppose," said Lily, with a faint smile. "Mr. Beverley had in carpenters searching the upper rooms to-day, but they found nothing. He says he will make a more systematic search after the holidays."

"But in the meantime the gold may be stolen, and where will you be then?" I cried. "Let us set to work and look for it at once, Lily!"

"But where shall we look? It may be buried in the garden, or in the wood behind the house."

"If it is, we can't help it. But I don't think that is at all likely. Your father would wish to have his money where he could see it whenever he chose."

"That is true. But if it is in the house, it must be in the cellar, for the upper rooms have been well searched, and all the walls have been—'sounded,' I think they called it."

"Very good. Let us have a look at the cellar!"

We each got a candle, and in addition I carried a small poker. Down a long passage, and then down half a dozen steps, and we stood at the cellar door. It was not locked, and we pushed it open.

The great space was silent as the grave. Not even the scamper of a rat broke the stillness. One part of it had at one time been used as a coal cellar, for coal dust and "slack" were scattered over a considerable part of the brick floor.

"There is nothing here," said Lily, clinging to me in a fit of nervousness. "Let us go away."

"How do you know there is nothing here?" I demanded. "Did you expect to see the gold stacked in one corner, like potatoes? I mean to go over the floor and see whether any of the bricks have been disturbed."

"Oh, Mary, that would take us all night!"

"Not a bit of it! But there is a quicker way. Just wait here a moment—while I fetch a jug of water."

Lily, however, insisted on coming with me. We went upstairs, and fetched, not a jug, but a pail of water, and I poured it gently over the cellar floor. It lay in filthy little pools all over the place, except at one spot. There it would not lie a moment, but disappeared at once. I darted forward, and tried one of the bricks with the point of my poker.

"Here, Lily!" I cried, in a whirl of excitement. "Here is the very place! The bricks have been taken up and laid down again quite lately. And see if that isn't earth there, underneath the coal dust? It is! I can move the bricks with the greatest ease."

One after another I dislodged them, till I had a heap of them lying on one side. Then we went for the kitchen shovel. The earth had been disturbed very recently. It was loose and soft.

I worked on in silence, Lily watching me, till a foot beneath the surface, my shovel struck on something hard.

"An iron box!" I cried, working away as if for my life.

Five minutes later Lily and I stood on opposite sides of the hole. It was a grave! The hard substance was a leaden coffin. We could not doubt that the body of the wretched miser whom Lily had called father lay within.

The shock was a dreadful one to the poor child. She reproached herself bitterly, and to my mind quite unnecessarily, with leaving her father to the care of strangers, and accused herself of various crimes which I had not time to listen to.

I was in haste to get the grave covered in, that I might get Lily upstairs and put her to bed, for I was dreadfully afraid lest she should have a fit of hysterics there and then. However, I succeeded in quieting her, and at last I got her upstairs, and stowed her away in an immense four-post bed, which she begged me to share with her. I was so tired that I was quite ready to keep her company. It was not yet ten o'clock when we both sank into a deep, dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HALF-OPEN DOOR.

SUDDENLY I was wide awake. Had any noise disturbed me? I thought not. For a few moments I lay listening. The silence was intense. The sound of soft snow blown against the window panes had ceased. Lily was sleeping peacefully, within reach of my hand. The sound of a deep-toned, rusty church bell striking the hour came faintly to my ear. One! Two! Three! Four! Four o'clock.

The carts were to be there at five!

The idea—not the words—projected themselves into my brain, as though some one had spoken at my ear. Where? At the churchyard. What were carts wanted for at a lonely churchyard at five o'clock on Christmas morning?

Did some one mean to carry away a body secretly? I had heard of such things. But two carts at least were to be used. Why should they want two carts? And whose body was it they wanted to carry off? Could it be that of Lily's father? No; that had been buried in the cellar. Why?—Why?—

Like a lightning flash the answer to this question darted into my mind. What a fool I had been! What a supine, senseless idiot, to lie there warm and comfortable, while my friend's whole future was at stake!

I was out of bed in a moment, and putting on my clothes. I would go to the churchyard, and if I was powerless to prevent what might be happening there, I could at least watch what was being done. If only I knew where there was a house at which I might find help. But it was out of the question to begin seeking help at that time of night. Besides, who would be willing to leave his warm bed on such a wild goose chase as mine must appear to be?

In ten minutes I was stealing out of the porch, the great door closed behind me. The night was still now, and very cold. There was an inch of snow on the ground, which made it much lighter than it had been when I arrived. Down the silent avenue, still and solemn as the nave of a cathedral, I sped, and out into the high road. I was as much alone as if I had been on an iceberg in the middle of the Atlantic.

Soon the dark mass of the old church came in sight. There was the gate. There was the yew under which I had cowered in fear as the two conspirators passed by. Not a soul was in sight; but—had my ears deceived me, or was that the sound of a cough? And was not that the rumble of carts, barely audible over the snow? I could not be sure.

I passed silently up between the gravestones, every moment expecting to see the gleam of a lantern, but there was none. No light but that of the snow glistening in the starlight.

I stole to the place where I had nearly fallen over into the passage to the vault and peered down.

Yes! There was a broad beam of yellow light, issuing from a half-open door. The door was that of the vault. Someone was inside.

With movements softer than a cat's I stole down the snow-covered steps, and peered in. A tall man stood with his back to me, bending over something I could not see. But I did see the sides of coffins, as they lay ranged on shelves of brick round the sides of the vault. On the floor was a bull's-eye lantern and some deal boxes. All this I took in at a glance. And one other thing I saw. Close to my hand, in the lock of the door, from which it had not been removed, was the handle of a bright steel key.

Gently, gently, I pulled the heavy door closer and closer. The hinges must have been well oiled, for they did not creak.

It was not till I had got the door close to, and began to move the key in the lock, that I made the first sound.

There was a loud cry inside, and the noise of a man hurling himself against the closed door. One good wrench, and the thing was done. The key was turned, and out of the lock; and I was running up the steps with it firmly clenched in my right hand.

Like a ghost I fitted over the white tombstones, making straight for the gate. What was that noise? What were those dark objects standing to the right of the gate? Two carts, with great brown horses. I stood still. A bulky figure came from behind the nearest cart, and stood before me.

I daresay he was the more surprised of the two. For some seconds we stood and stared at one another without speaking. I knew him. It was the stout man of the railway carriage! If my life had depended on my speaking or running away, I could not have uttered a word or moved a limb.

Suddenly the eyes of my antagonist fell upon the key I held in my hand, and he made a dash for it. That restored me, as it were, to myself. With a quick, side-ward movement I evaded him, and darting away, I raced along the white road.

In an instant, of course, he was plunging after me.

I had a few yards start, and at first I increased the distance between us, for I was strong and lightly clad, while my pursuer was heavy and short of breath, and encumbered with a heavy ulster. But it was not long before strength began to tell. I was being rapidly overtaken. To struggle further was madness, yet I panted on. Nearer and nearer came the heavy steps behind me. The man had his hand on my shoulder. With a sudden twist I wrenched it away, and sprang forward. That actually gained a yard or two for me. But it was of no use. My breath came in great sobs. The glistening snow seemed to be moving all around me, like the billows of the sea. I gave one despairing cry—and launched myself head first into

the arms of a short, thick-set man, who came running down a narrow lane on the left.

Crack!

With a thud I hope never to hear again, the fist of the newcomer went crashing into the face of my enemy. Right back he went, as though he had been struck by a cannon ball that bore him down by its own momentum; and he lay, a mass of flesh and rough cloth, in the middle of the snow.

"Mary!"

"Tom! Oh, Tom, Tom, can it really be you? Take me away, Tom—anywhere away from this place. I—I—can't speak. I have been running for my life. But you—how did you come here?"

I clung to him with both hands, and called him, in my fright, by names a thousand times more endearing than I had ever used to him before. He put his arm round my waist, soothed, and petted me; and together we went back to the churchyard.

Tom explained that having promised to spend Christmas day with me, it was necessary above all things that he should keep his promise; and he had accordingly come down by the night mail, and walked over from Ribston. He had meant to "hang about somewhere," he said, till it was time to go to church; and then he would have surprised me by being there before me.

But it was delightful to watch Tom's face as I told him my story. Disdaining my suggestion that he should seek assistance at some of the houses near, he went down to the vault, threw open the door, and gripped the man he found there by the collar.

There was a bit of a scuffle, but Tom, though the shorter, was much the stronger man of the two, and he soon had the other at his mercy.

Then we had time to look about us, and a pretty sight we saw! The floor of the vault was strewn all over with sovereigns; and a good many of them had found their way into the pockets of our captive, which Tom speedily made him unload. The coffin which had been supposed to contain the body of Lily's father had been burst open, and the gold with which it was filled had been partly transferred to the deal boxes I had noticed before. There was no need to talk about the plot that had so nearly been successful. It stood manifest before our eyes.

But on second thoughts it occurred to me that perhaps Lily would not thank me for sending her uncle and cousin to gaol. It would bring great scandal on the family name, and no particular good could result from it. Indeed, I felt so sure that Lily would take this view of the matter, that I persuaded Tom to let the old man go.

He disappeared, as Tom said, like a streak of greased lightning; and by the time we had collected the scattered coins, and put them into one of the boxes, locked up the vault, and left the churchyard, carts and horses and conspirators had alike vanished. The fallen man had evidently recovered, at least so far as to allow of his being carted away. Neither father nor son were ever again seen in that part of the country.

Tom stood sentry over the gold till I had succeeded in rousing some of the cottagers, and dispatching them for the police. The treasure was properly guarded over Christmas day, and on Boxing-day it was taken in carts to the Bank at Ribston. Tom, Lily, and I spent Christmas together; and I am perfectly sure that a jollier party than we made there was not that day in England.

Lily did not give up the mills and the grain business, as most people thought she would. She engaged me as manager; and, (thanks chiefly to old Pillet, who "knew the ropes,") we are making the thing a great success. I can see that very soon the work will be too much for one pair of hands, and those a woman's. I mean to ask Tom to give up the sea, and then resign my post in his favour. I don't think he will refuse me.

A 55-Guinea Piano for Nothing!



This is a picture of the 55-Guinea Piano offered to readers of *Pearson's Weekly*.

It is made of Walnut, is 4ft. 2in. in height, 4ft. 8in. in length, and 2ft. in depth.



HERE are few people who would refuse the offer of a handsome fifty-five guinea piano. If there is by any chance amongst our readers one who feels that he does not want this instrument, let him stop reading here. Those who wish to try their skill in order to qualify themselves for this competition, must read the following conditions:

1. Below will be found four sentences. The task set is to transform each of them into another sentence, using only, and all, the letters contained in the original sentence.
 2. Write out your attempt on half a sheet of notepaper, append your name and address, and send it to us in an envelope marked "ANAGRAM," to reach this office not later than January 13th.
 3. Competitors may send in any number of attempts, but each set of four must be written on a separate sheet. The competitor whose list is considered the best will receive an upright grand pianoforte, value fifty-five guineas, manufactured by Messrs. Chappell and Co., London, of whose name and reputation are a guarantee as to its value.
- Numerous consolation prizes will be awarded in the shape of sovereigns, pencil-cases, penknives and books.

You may use the apostrophes and stops if you like.

SENTENCES.

1. If it's in "P.W." it's so.
2. Mainly About People.
3. The hand that rocks the cradle.
4. Let them all come.

Tell your friends about it on Christmas Day.

If you liked the Christmas Number of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, now entirely out of print, there can be no possible shadow of doubt, no shadow of doubt whatever, that the January issue, on sale next Saturday, December 31st, will please you still more.

Cabul Ben Lomond's Card.

FROM THE GUM ARABIC.

Lo! it was a foggy day in the street called Fleet. Trade was slow, and men looked twice at a shkel before they spent it in thomasfoolery. And Cabul Ben Lomond, a merchant of the Arcade of Lowther, was wending his way towards the City when he met the gazelle of his heart—yes, the favourite beauty whom he would have placed in his harem to the shunting therefrom of the pet magpie and terrier dog which comforted him in the long evenings.

"My greetings to thee, lily-white damsel, whose eyes are two pools in the oasis, and whose hat is as high as once was the maypole in the street of the Strand! The house of Kurin Sellah may well be proud of thee; and mark! though my gains this year be not as vast as those of a pantomime in full swing, yet verily it will run to a Christmas card, and thou mayest expect one of the costliest as well as the most *recherché*-est, to use the tongue of the Franks."

And the light of the house of Kurin Sellah tripped on with a smile that no full moon ever equalled, and showed, too, the latest accession to her assortment of grinders on the hire system, plated with gold and set in platinum; for such is the smile of guileless maidens of three-and-thirty when a present is in prospect.

And the days passed, and the twenty-fifth of December approached; and Cabul Ben Lomond got him down an ancient album of his married sister's, even Pol Yarm Ben Lomond, and he extracted a card, highly coloured and fantastically traced, and, calling a slave, he bade him convey it to the lady of his affections without covering the posts on the road.

And when the card was received by the daughter of the house of Sellah, she gave a deep chuckle, and she fetched up a sigh of great joyfulness, and, a moment after, startled all the household with a fit of hysterics, for, lo! on the back of the board of paste was there not writ, in her own hand, when she was a little maid at school:

To Pol Yarm Ben Lomond.
Affection's Tribotee,
From her luvlin friend
Petsee Wetsee.

For the hapless Cabul Ben Lomond, in his strong bent to saving, had not looked hard at the second-hand offering, behind and before, alow and aloft, and fore and aft, as is meet in such dodges, and he had returned to Petsee Wetsee, of the house of Sellah, the same card she had given his sister in their fourteenth year.

And now a pale-gilled man, in a furry turban and a Newmarket gaberdine, is hieing hence by the caravan to the wilds of Connemara, and a red-faced maiden of three-and-thirty is searching for him with a revolver and a marriage license, to the end that he will repent him of his meanness and make her his favourite sultana, or suffer himself to be wiped out with a Navy Colt from the family roll of the Ben Lomonds.

And the moral is plain: Whosoever stealeth a watch to make a presentation of it to an inspector of police, in order that things may be smoothed over in case his shop barneth down when trade languisheth, let him take heed that he scratch out the crest and initials of the previous owner thereof.

It is told.

MRS. BENHAM: "I believe there is a man under the bed."

Benham: "Well, I hope he is getting more sleep than I am."

ROLLINS: "I begin to doubt whether my wife still loves me as she used to do."

Collins: "Why so?"

Rollins: "Because I came home last night with my hair cut and she never noticed it."

Result of the "Collection" Competition.

MR. J. COSTIFF, of Bridgefoot, Sawbridgeworth, Herts, is the winner of the solid silver pencil-case in this competition of curious collections, and a copy of Mr. G. B. Burgin's novel, "Fortune's Footballs," has been forwarded to each of the following:

R. Macara, Aitonlea, Greenock; H. W. Tyler, 43 Osborne Road, Forest Gate, E.; A. Stannard, 68 Westwood Road, Leek; Mrs. Bonham, 38 Adams Avenue, Northampton; Geo. Robinson, 3 Beech Street, Lancs; E. N. Thomas, 21 Ivy Bank, Brunswick Road, Douglas, Isle of Man; W. Gillespie, 43 Castle Street, Barry, near Cardiff; John Dewar, 77 Eveline Street, Glasgow; Mrs. Kate C. Castle, Brookside, Llanfyllin, Mont.; F. Copeland, "The Mount," Blyth, Northants; Miss M. Craig, Fairfield Cottage, Hawkhill, Arr. N.E.; Miss L. H. Jones, 6 Lower Pembroke Street, Dublin; Mrs. M. Eastleigh, 23 Charter Street, Chatham; G. M. Brown, 3 Burn's Place, Bonnington, Edinburgh; J. Goolen, 161 Constitution Street, Leith; H. Ruston, 19 Goodwood Road, Albert Road, Southsea; A. O. Allen, 15 Malrose Street, Hull; J. J. Rosditer, 4 Connaught Terrace, Kingstown, Dublin; S. Q. M. S. W. J. Goodhall, Army Pay Corps, Winchester; F. Fernley, Fernfield Terrace, Halifax; S. Bell, Grove Park, Chislewick, W.; A. E. Du Bois, 6 Lavender Sweep, Clapham, S.W.; F. W. Layzell, Grange Hill, Coggeshall, Essex; R. W. Ward, 7 High Bank Road, Burton-on-Trent; S. K. Taylor, 49 Balliol Road, Bootle, Liverpool.

When Christmas was Forbidden.

As everybody knows, Christ was not born on December 25th, and that Christmas, though celebrating His birth, is really a survival of the heathen festival—among the Celts called Yule, and by the Romans Saturnalia—celebrating the turning-point of the year, and the henceforth increasing power of the sun.

On this account the Puritans denounced Christmas as a heathen and Popish feast, and did not observe it. During the Commonwealth they carried their objections into force and forbade the celebration of Christmas. In 1644, Parliament ordered December 25th to be strictly kept as a solemn fast, and that all people should pass the day in humbly bemoaning the great national sin which they and their ancestors had hitherto committed on that day by eating boar's head, drinking ale flavoured with roasted apples, devouring plum pudding, and romping under the mistletoe. For twelve years this order remained in force.

Municipal authorities also sought to reduce Christmas Day to the level of other days. We are told that, "Upon Wednesday, December 22nd, 1647, the cryer of Canterbury, by the appointment of Master Maior, openly proclaimed that Christmas Day and all other superstitious festivals should be put down, and that a market should be kept upon a Christmas Day."

For attending service in the Cathedral on that day many people were mobbed. The inhabitants divided themselves into two parties—the Christmasites and Anti-Christmasites, and came to blows.

On December 24th, 1652, an Order in Council was issued, proclaiming "that no observation shall be had of the five-and-twentieth day of December, commonly called Christmas Day, nor any solemnity used or exercised in churches upon that day in respect thereof."

This was simply a re-proclamation of an edict of 1647, abolishing Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, and all other holy days. Soldiers were sent to the houses of all suspected persons to search the ovens and larders, and carry away for their own consumption all seasonable dainties found therein. People who ate mince pies and decorated their houses with evergreens were declared unworthy of sitting in Parliament.

But the restoration of King Charles was also the restoration of King Christmas, who has ever since reigned undisturbed. But the Puritan's hatred of Christmas lingered long among Nonconformists.

It has now disappeared, and services are held in all places of worship on Christmas Day, while the feast is celebrated equally by all sects.

BOVRIL



A Store of Vitality.

How many of us who are now making big resolutions for the coming year will be more or less feeling the want of the vitality of body and mind with which to carry them out! Bovril, the purest form of concentrated nourishment—the vital principle of prime ox beef—is the surest guarantee of that very vitality we need. It is nutritious, stimulating, easily digestible. It nourishes the blood, and makes bone, brain and muscle. It supplies a store of warmth from a store of strength, and is thus a safeguard against colds, chills, and kindred ailments.

Bovril is the joy of the thrifty housewife and the busy cook. With magic ease and celerity it can be transformed into rich soups, broths, gravies, as well as into delicious, sustaining delicacies of various kinds. It adds savour and strength to a host of dishes—roasted meats, game, meat pies and puddings, curries, ragoûts, and a whole array of entrées. Bovril, with its many potentialities, has given to the culinary art a new lease of life. And the gourmet, the athlete, the child, the convalescent, the invalid are the gainers.

Bovril is Liquid Life.

LOOKING FOR MISSING RELATIVES.

"The Rose of Judah."

A TALE OF THE CAPTIVITY.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the
Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII. (continued).

EVER since the battle of Erech, Belzan's shield-bearer and charioteer had been kept closely guarded and carefully isolated from all but their guards, who were strictly forbidden on pain of death, to hold any communication whatever with them. They had not been, as was usual, tortured or ill-treated in any way. They had simply been kept in silence and solitude, for Cyrus, who was even a greater statesman than he was a soldier, had very quickly seen that, vile as such instruments were, they might be used to a good end and be worth more to him than many regiments. They knew absolutely nothing of what had happened, since the King had ordered them to be bound and taken away, and the last that they had seen of Belzan was his apparently lifeless body, transfixed by the arrow, being lifted out of the chariot.

They were brought into the tent bound and blindfolded, as they always were when they were taken out of the leather tent which formed their moving prison.

"Let their eyes be opened!" said the King. The bandages were taken off and they blinked and stared round the splendid tent like men kept long in darkness and brought suddenly into the sunlight. Then together their eyes fell upon Belzan sitting there hale and strong among the captains of Cyrus. At the sight, the knees of the two traitors knocked together and gave way beneath them, and if their guards had not held them up they would have fallen before him on their faces. Cyrus looked at them with royal contempt and said in a voice that contrasted terribly with his usual tones:

"Traitors and slaves, why do you fear to look upon the face of the man who was once your captain and your friend? Have you never seen a sorely wounded man made well again? Should you not rather rejoice?"

The wretched men stared speechless and shivering with fear about the tent and Cyrus went on in an even harder and sterner tone than before:

"Your guilt is known. You, Sharruk, pretended to stumble in the chariot and so moved the shield aside that my arrow pierced the breast of your lord. You, Ziggur, instead of taking your wounded lord, as your duty bade you, out of the battle where he could be cared for by his own people, drove the chariot among his enemies and sought to buy your lives by selling his. For this you would have died on crosses long ago but that you did not do this vile thing of yourselves."

"Now speak, and speak truly, for your words will be written down and you shall sign them and if any lie be found in them, or if they do not tell all the truth, you shall not die, but you shall live days and nights of torment till you shall pray for any death that shall give you release. But first know that the noble Belzan has already asked your lives of me and I have given them to him and he has sworn that when justice is done you shall go free."

"I have sworn," said Belzan, looking at them without any anger in his eyes. "Vile as ye are, ye were but the tools of one viller still. Therefore confess freely and in the hour that he pays the penalty ye shall take the reward he promised you. Thus hath the King promised and I have sworn."

The two traitors, overjoyed at the prospect of life and liberty where they had only looked for a death of shame and agony, did not hesitate at the second betrayal, and the pens of the scribes were soon busy taking down on four separate sheets of parchment a full confession which set forth that, just before the march to the south began, Nanit had come to them from Belshazzar and offered them each in his name a thousand of the little gold bars that passed as currency in Babylon, together with a villa and grounds on the banks of the Euphrates if Belzan did not return alive from the war.

They had been so astounded at the monstrous proposal that they had refused to believe that Nanit really had the King's authority to make it. They thought rather that he was seeking to gratify some private spite. But Nanit explained to them why Belzan's death was necessary to the King and at last overcame their scruples by giving Sharruk a clay tablet on which he wrote before them in the cuneiform character the terms of the contract and had signed it with his own cypher and, according to the usual custom, by pressing his thumb upon the soft clay.

This tablet had been taken after they had accepted the bargain and had been found in Sharruk's pouch when he was taken prisoner.

"Let the tablet be brought," said Cyrus when they had signed each page of the confession by pressing their thumbs, smeared with lamp-black and oil, on the parchments, and had added their own signatures in the cuneiform character.

The Chamberlain at once produced it from his pouch and laid it before the King. Cyrus looked at it for a moment with an expression of profound disgust and then, passing it to Belzan with his own hands, he said with a laugh:

"That piece of clay should loosen many a brick in the great walls of Babylon for us. When this Nanit goes to the stake we will hang this about his neck so that men may see what manner of man Belshazzar called friend. And now let these two be taken away that they may no longer pollute the air we breathe. Let them be strictly guarded

but well treated, since our word has passed, till Belzan is ready to depart.

"Let copies of this tablet be made in plaster and I will sign them in token that they are true. Then means must be found to get one of them and a copy of the confession together with our own proclamation to the people of Babylon into the city which, methinks, will be a task worthy of the stoutest heart and clearest head amongst us. But of that we can talk later."

As the King ceased speaking Arioch stood up and said:

"If the ears of my Lord the King are open I would say something on that matter."

"Say on, friend Arioch," replied Cyrus, nodding towards him. "If thou canst tell us of a way into the city thy counsel will not be forgotten in the day that I sit on the throne of Sargon."

"I am but a plain captain of spearmen, Lord," said Arioch, "and as such, deeds become me better than words. It has been proved that Belshazzar is a hirer of assassins, and as such, must be hated by all who call themselves honest men. Moreover, it is known that, by the advice of this accursed spy of his, he will devote, nay, perhaps he has already devoted, the richest and most industrious citizens of Babylon to fire and sword, death and dishonour. With my Lord's permission I will take the tablets and the parchment into the city and see to it that every honest man in Babylon knows of the infamy of Belshazzar, and if fortune is kind to me when my Lord marches against the city he shall find one at least of its gates open to him."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MISSION OF ARIOCH.

ANOTHER ten days had passed since the Persian standard had been seen fluttering far and wide from north to south by the watchers on the towers of Nimitti-Bel and since the guards at the northern water-gate had answered the prayer of a poor ragged peasant to be allowed to pass through on his raft with his trifle of merchandise for the market by taking what was worth having, ripping the skins on which it floated and flinging its owner into the river. He sank like a stone and they turned away to gamble for the scanty spoil and had not noticed in the dusk that his black close-cropped head had bobbed up again some fifty yards or so lower down the swift current.

It was thus that Arioch had accomplished the first and most perilous part of his desperate mission. Once inside the outer rampart it was an easy enough matter for one who knew the city as well as he did to get into Babylon itself. All he had to do was to represent himself as one of the many peasants who were starving and ruined in consequence of the forced contributions of provisions which Belshazzar had already levied on all cultivators of the soil between the two ramparts, to hire himself as a labourer for a little meal and oil and a draught or two of sour wine a day to one of the produce-farmers who had bought the right of levying the contributions and bringing them into the market to sell at the highest possible price what was left when the King's fifth and the priests' tenth had been taken by the assessors at the inner water-gate.

In this way he had easily penetrated into the city. The tablet and the parchments tightly sewn up in water-proof skin were strapped to his body under his tunic and never left him day or night. The King's signet, also rolled up in skin, hung from his neck by a coarse cord, looking nothing different to the charms and amulets which the lower orders of Babylon constantly wore.

For the first two or three days he had contented himself with learning the gossip of the city and the market-place and the taverns and it did not take him long to discover that the city was even now ripe for revolution.

Belshazzar and his court were revelling in the costliest luxury on the exactions wrung from the merchants, agriculturalists, and artisans. Three-tenths or all the produce of the district on which the city now depended for its existence were taken for the King and the priesthood and the remaining seven-tenths were sold only by the monopolists who had bought the right to buy them at the city gates. Prices had therefore enormously increased and with them the discontent of the people.

As soon as he had made certain of this and learnt to trust to his disguise he went into the Jewish Quarter and sought out a friend of Michael's named Ithar from whom he had gleaned some news in the market-place and as he knew that he could be trusted absolutely he told him frankly who he was and what errand he had come on as soon as the old Israelite had granted him the interview which he had craved on pretence of hiring himself to him as a servant.

When he whispered his name, Ithar looked keenly at him and said:

"What, thou, Arioch, cropped and shaved and in rage—thou the curled and bearded warrior of Ashur whom we saw but a few days ago bine-robed and glittering in harness of gold and steel? Well, well, a noble of Babylon would not have done this save for good reasons. Now I know that thy mother was one of the People and I know that the Queen hath ever been friendly to us, even as the Great King was. So I can trust thee and so will all our people. What wouldst thou have us do?"

"Tell me first," answered Arioch, "if anything is known of what is going on in the palaces. What of the Queen? I have heard in the streets and market-place that she is never seen abroad now."

"That is true," said Ithar. "As thou knowest, we have to make it our business to know what our rulers do and, as far as we can learn, even what they think. Only this morning I received news from the palace that the Queen's tirewoman, Pant-Anat the Egyptian, had gone to Nanit, the King's pander, no doubt allured by a bribe of some sort and told what she knew, and maybe more also, of the Queen's conversations with Arzames and thyself and the result

of this was that Pant-Anat was taken from the service of the Queen and set to watch over our unhappy Miriam—"

"Ah, yes, Miriam," said Arioch impatiently. "I had forgotten. I should have asked about her first. What has happened to her? Has the King taken her into his harem yet?"

"She is there even now, but as I am told by one of the eunuchs who has long been in the pay of our House, the strange sickness with which she was smitten in the garden, no doubt by the mercy of the Lord, still afflicts her and she lies yonder in Belshazzar's palace living and yet dead, unconscious in mind and helpless in body."

"As thou knowest, Daniel awoke her from this strange sleep. Then Belshazzar took her into the citadel of the Palace and tempted her with the sight of his splendour and riches. Then she fell into the sleep again and for all we know she lies in it still. Daniel is in prison, so are Michael and Judith. Michael's villa at Borsip has been given to Nanit as a reward for his harangues in the market-place arousing the Assyrians against us, but as it lies outside Nimitti-Bel it is not much use to him now. The Queen, from all I can hear, is strictly confined to the New Palace and all the men of thy Guard have been taken away and replaced by the King's Guard."

"And what of the Proclamations?" asked Arioch. "Have they been carried out?"

"Hast thou been ten days in Babylon and dost not know that?" asked Ithar, lifting his grey shaggy eye-brows. "Look at me," he went on in a voice that trembled with anger. "Look at me. A month ago I was a rich man. I had my stores of merchandise in the city and my villa between the ramparts on the banks of the Euphrates. My wife and children were clothed in silk and fine linen and my bond was good with the house of Egibi for a hundred talents of gold."

"To-day I am poor; to-morrow I and my family may be starving, for the last of Belshazzar's iniquities is that he has ordered the Egibis to pay all Jewish monies in their hand into the royal treasury, to cancel all mortgages held by Hebrews on the property of Assyrians, and to transfer them to his own chamberlain."

"Moreover no Hebrew can now plead for the recovery of debt before the judges, and only last night the house of Hushai, also an Elder of the People, was broken into by a mob, led no doubt by the agents of Nanit—whom may the Lord judge in His own good time!—because it was rumoured that he had a store of gold hidden away, and he and his wife and his sons were slain and his daughters carried away to be sold in the marriage-market. The same thing may happen to any of us at any hour. Truly, Arioch, these are heavy days for the People of the Lord, and if I mistake not heavier are still to come."

"Or lighter," said Arioch between his teeth. "Lighter for you and Babylon and heavier for this would-be murderer who sits on the throne of Sargon."

Then, opening his tunic, he loosened the straps round his body and took out the packet containing the fac-simile of Nanit's tablet and the roll of parchment.

"What sayest thou? Murderer?" whispered Ithar.

"Murderer, not as king or despot, but as man?"

"Murderer as all," replied Arioch, tapping the packet with his fingers. "I have evidence here, attested before Cyrus in my own hearing, signed by Belshazzar's tools and countersigned by Cyrus himself, proving beyond doubt that Belshazzar bribed Belzan's shield-bearer and charioteer to make sure that he never returned alive from the campaign in the south."

"Then if that is so," said the old Hebrew slowly, "it should be enough of itself to raise a revolt in Babylon. Belzan's father is Tartan of the hosts, the army adored Belzan himself, and I saw many a bearded warrior weep when his horse came back riderless. If that were only known in Babylon—"

"As it quickly may be," said Arioch. "Now look you, you have many skillful scribes, writers on clay and parchment and papyrus, men who know all the dialects spoken in the city. Here in this roll are the written confessions of Ziggur and Sharruk setting forth that they were bribed to do this thing. Here, too, is the plaster-cast of the clay tablet which Nanit gave to Sharruk to bind the bargain. What if these were multiplied and scattered through the city so that all men might read them, so that all men might know the infamy of Belshazzar and Nanit?"

The old Hebrew thought in silence for a few moments, and then looking up he said slowly:

"It would mean revolution in the city, it would mean the doing of all that Nanit said in the market-place, murder and plunder and outrage on the weak and defenceless, strife between the factions, blood and fire and steel everywhere."

"But not all on one side," said Arioch, "and, moreover, in a few days there will be help from outside, and, mind you, revolution at the right time may be better, and cannot be worse, than the final rage of Belshazzar when he learns that his rule can only be a matter of weeks or months. If we act quickly, all may be saved; if we delay, all may be lost. Tell me now, is Karfax, my lieutenant of the Guard, still a freeman and under arms?"

"He is," replied Ithar, "since he is a pure-blooded Assyrian and has had the wit to deceive even Nanit as to his loyalty."

"That is good then," said Arioch. "I know where his loyalty lies. He is heart and soul the Queen's man, as I am. Can you get a letter sent to him to-night. I could do much with him in an hour's talk if once I could show him what I have here."

"It can be done," said Ithar. "I know that a great part of the army is devoted to the Queen and sorely impatient at being kept here when it should be out on the plains fighting the Persians."

"There will be no need for them to fight the Persians," said Arioch. "Their true enemy is here, and of that I will very soon convince Karfax. Give me a tablet and I will write to him now."

(To be continued.)

Few people appreciate the severity of the training which ladies of the ballet have to undergo. "P.W." readers will learn all about it by studying "Muscular Training of Fair Dancers" in next Wednesday's ATHLETIC RECORD.

Was advised to take cod-liver oil.

But until he tried Scott's Emulsion
he thought he could not take it.



ALFRED J. AMOS.

There are many people who, like the gentleman whose photograph we here introduce, find great difficulty in taking cod-liver oil. Still, they know they need this oil, and it only remains for them to learn the best way to take it in order to derive the benefit to be obtained from its many medicinal properties. Possibly you will be interested in the following experience:

"31 Lochaber Road, High Road,

Lee, S.E., August 9th, 1898.

"Dear Sirs,—Having had a severe attack of bronchitis, I was advised by a medical man to take cod-liver oil. In fact, I have been so advised several times, and have tried to do so time after time, and with always the same result, namely, that after a few doses I have been obliged to give up taking it, owing to the nausea and other evil effects, having such an irritable stomach that it is an utter impossibility for me to take any kind of fat or oil in a natural way. Although it is known to most people that fat is a necessary part of our diet, it is a well-known fact that cod-liver oil is a most valuable article of food and medicine also to all who suffer from chest diseases, or to those who are in a weak and debilitated state. I therefore determined to try Scott's Emulsion, and am able to state that not only could I obtain it, but could take it freely and with great benefit. It strengthened my whole system, and greatly relieved and strengthened the chest and lungs. I may also say that my children, two of whom have suffered very much with bronchitis, have been greatly relieved and strengthened by its use, and they

will take it readily, and actually ask for it. I can strongly recommend all who suffer from bronchitis, or any cough, cold, &c., and also those who suffer from general weakness, to give it a trial, and they will be surprised and greatly benefited by its use.

"Yours truly,

"(Signed) ALFRED J. AMOS."

We will say that Mr. Amos is perfectly right in his theory that fat is a necessary part of our diet, and when people are run down in health, or suffer from chronic bronchitis, or are susceptible to taking cold, or in fact any local affection of throat or lungs, it is almost essential that cod-liver oil should be taken both as a specific and as a food. In Scott's Emulsion the problem of making cod-liver oil acceptable to everybody is admirably solved. This preparation is not only palatable, as Mr. Amos's letter indicates, but by reason of its perfectly emulsified form it does not tax digestion, and moreover is readily absorbed into the blood.

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"I am sending a few lines to say what a grand medicine the Lung Tonic is for Asthma. I have had Asthma about 25 years, and after taking two bottles I feel quite a new man."—W. BRIDELL, 21 Thames Street, Staines.

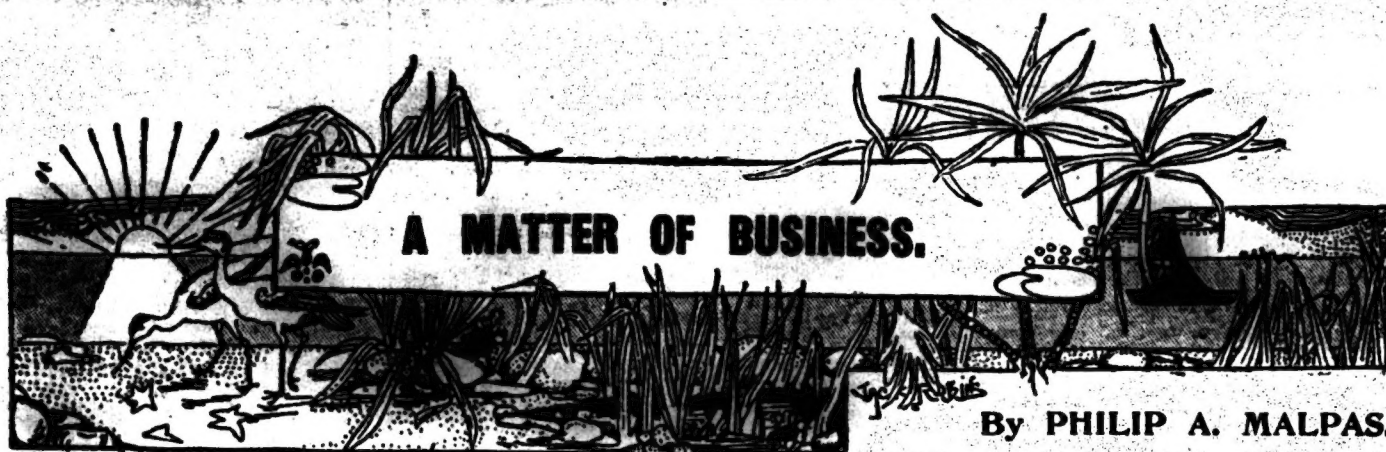
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By PHILIP A. MALPAS.

GABRIELLE DESAILLES was the one remaining treasure of the old couple who were eking out their days in patient expectation of the final summons home. They could help her a little by dressing the dolls she made, but it was hard to live on the few francs she earned in this way, and one by one the few little trinkets they still possessed went to pay the rent until now there was nothing left, nothing at all. Work was scarce and the doll-making hardly sufficed to feed and clothe them. Yet the rent must be paid somehow, if it were only for one week until she could find more work for her willing fingers.

True, five francs would be sufficient, but when one has nothing at all five francs is a large fortune!

But Gabrielle faced matters bravely, and the old couple never guessed that she was in difficulties, even, when she returned one day without her ear-rings, which she had worn as long as she could remember. Yet this innocent hypocrisy was very feebly carried out, and the dreadful fear of want was ever before her eyes. She wept in secret to think that she could do nothing to avert the catastrophe which must inevitably come soon.

Only five francs! Surely there must be some way of earning such a small sum!

She had tried the theatres but had only met with insult, for her beauty was that of an innocent girl who knew no wrong, and as such, without influence, the managers could find no place for her.

"A good-looking girl like you should not be in want," they said. But she did not understand what they meant, and they gave her no help or hope, while her sensitive nature instinctively shrank from the familiar tones in which they addressed her.

Gabrielle was in despair. In her little room she knelt by the side of her bed and prayed the prayer of an innocent child, fervent and sincere. But it all seemed futile, for how could she expect an answer?

"It cannot be," she cried passionately, "that the good God will let us starve while thieves and rogues prosper. They tell me to believe and have faith, but it is always talk—they never help!"

Her long golden tresses fell in waving masses over her shoulders as she sobbed by the bedside, and almost concealed her figure as they fell to the ground. It was the pride of her parents, and people said that the hair of angels was just like hers.

"I would make any sacrifice to keep them in comfort until they die," she said. "I suppose I shall soon follow them, but until then I must live for their sake. Only show me the way and I shall believe!"

A stray tress of hair fell across the pillow as she prayed, and a ray of sunlight shone in golden splendour on its glossy surface. It seemed as though the sunbeam had found a brother, as it sported with the rebellious lock of hair.

"Surely this rare sunbeam penetrating into the tiny attic at such a time must bear some message!" Gabrielle thought, for she was superstitious as all French girls are.

She thought for a moment in silence. Suddenly she cried, "I see it now!" and a smile of pleasure lighted up her beautiful face, but it soon faded away and gave place to a look of undisguised sorrow.

Her prayer was answered but her words had not been forgotten. The one condition attached to the answered prayer was the hardest of all—she must part with her single glory—her beautiful golden hair. Poor Gabrielle!

Hesitation was fatal to her courage, and she knew it; but having gone so far she would not retreat. Hastily putting on her hat and shawl she made her way quickly and fearfully through alleys and side streets to the shop of Monsieur Tito, as though it were a crime she were about to commit.

"Yes, Monsieur Tito would see her. Wanted to sell her hair, eh? Well, she must let him see what it was like."

The perfunctory was a rich man as riches go among men of his calling, and what could one wig more or less mean to him? Yet he gave a low whistle of surprise as Gabrielle diffidently let her long tresses fall almost to the ground.

Not often did the wig-maker see such a splendid head, and this was a treasure indeed.

Tremblingly she awaited his verdict, but he hesitated. Thoughtfully Monsieur Tito stroked his chin as he gazed at the beautiful girl before him. At last he said half mechanically as he had doubtless often done before.

"How much?"

Cold and hard the words sounded in Gabrielle's ears and her courage gave way. Unable to restrain her emotion she burst into tears and sobbed as if her heart would break at parting with her glorious hair.

Monsieur Tito comforted her as best he might, and strange to say discovered a rare fund of heartfelt sympathy which surprised even himself, but remained almost unnoticed by the girl, so overcome was she by her grief.

"Never mind, my dear, we cannot cut it off to-day. It would be madness to touch it yet!"

Gabrielle had now recovered some degree of her composure, and she remained firm in her resolve.

"I have no choice," she replied sadly. "It must go, for I need the money immediately."

"But a head like that is worth a fortune! You must let it grow longer still, and none but I must have the refusal of it. How much do you want?"

Gabrielle knew not what to say. She had heard rumours of large sums paid for long hair, but, untrained as she was in the ways of the world, she could not believe how very much. But encouraged by Monsieur Tito's kindly manner she said hesitatingly:

"I thought I might get twenty francs, but if you cannot give so much fifteen

will tide over the bad days until I can find work, and I will gladly take even that."

Monsieur Tito laughed softly to himself.

"Twenty francs! I would give a hundred if you only let it grow another year. Yes, I will give you twenty-five francs if you will let it grow until I want it."

Overwhelmed by this respite and by her sudden access of fortune Gabrielle thanked Monsieur Tito with tears in her eyes and returned home.

"The old people must never know," she said.

"Well, little one, how is the hair growing?" asked Monsieur with a smile. "Is it ready for cutting yet? *Mon Dieu*, but what a head! It is real gold!"

"It is ready whenever you wish," answered Gabrielle sadly.

"Well, well, it is not time yet. We must have patience."

He came very often now to see his "head" as he called it, but he never seemed quite satisfied.

"It will grow, it will grow," he would say, "and meanwhile here is the retaining fee. That is business, purely a matter of business. I have many clients like that."

Yet he made his business visits pleasant enough, and often they were unnecessary long for the alleged purpose of merely inspecting his "head." Once or twice he forgot to mention it altogether, but Gabrielle never noticed this, for she had grown accustomed to his kindly manner whenever he called, and, indeed, for as it appeared, she caught herself more than once longing for his return as though she had any right to think of him otherwise than as her patron, and a very condescending one at that.

Little though she knew it she had begun to love this Monsieur Tito who was so good to her, for she remembered how he might have taken advantage of her ignorance at first to make a very good bargain for himself, but had not done so. Even now she sometimes suspected that he was giving her more than the hair was really worth, man of business though he professed himself.

And then one day the old couple died as they had lived, peacefully and contented, never knowing the sacrifices Gabrielle had made for them. They died in the same hour, undivided as in life.

Gabrielle was now free to seek work for herself but for all that she would rather have starved to keep them than live alone. None had ever shown her any kindness except Monsieur Tito. Perhaps he could give her work to do now she was no longer bound to return to the little attic every night.

"I will ask Monsieur Tito to employ me. I can work so hard, and in time I may be able to set up in business for myself."

Monsieur Tito was rapturously admiring a new creation of his own when Gabrielle entered.

"It is not time yet, little one!" he said.

"I have not come about that to-day," she replied. "I have come to ask you to let me work for you. The old ones are dead, and I must work for myself now. I can dress hair very well for the dolls, so I can soon learn to make wigs if you will only try me."

"Gabrielle, I can find you something better than that. My business is growing large now, and I must have someone to look after the house. Will you be my little housekeeper?"

"A thousand thanks, Monsieur Tito, but you are too kind! I can never live alone in a house like that, people talk so. No, I want to make wigs, if you will teach me."

"But you mistake, little one. I want you to be my wife!"

And then, seeing that she smiled with pleasure, he gained courage and burst out with the story of his love for her ever since she had first entered his shop.

"It is you I want, little one, not the 'head' alone!"

Surprised by his impetuosity into a confession of reciprocal feelings on her part, she yielded to his caresses and he saw that her love was for him alone.

It is doubtful now that Monsieur Tito will ever cut off the beautiful golden hair which people used to say was like that of an angel, and Gabrielle is happy—happier even than when she spent her life working to keep the old ones in comfort until their time came to say good-bye to the world that treated them so shabbily.

Little more need be said, for there is good reason to believe that the wedding will take place before long. There is also a rumour that Gabrielle will receive the Montyon prize as a dot, for her unremitting devotion to the old people did not pass unnoticed in high quarters. So Monsieur Tito will never be able to say that she came to him penniless. But this is a secret.

DINER (looking scornfully at the portion of butter brought him by the waiter):

"What do you call that?"

Waiter: "That's butter."

Diner: "Butter, is it? Well, I've seen a good deal of butter in my life, but never before have I ever seen as small a quantity as that at one time."

A TRAMP, with his arm in a sling, called on Gilbooly for a copper, alleging that his arm had been injured in a recent railway accident.

"But yesterday you had the other arm in a sling," replied Gilbooly.

"Well, supposin' I had. Don't you think a feller's arm gets tired of being tied up all day? Besides, I've got concussion of the brain, and can't remember half the time which arm was broken."

A well-dressed woman is a pleasure to behold: every woman should therefore buy Isobel's DRESSMAKING AT HOME, published on the 1st of each month, and learn how to dress well at slight expense. The patterns are beautifully cut and amazingly cheap.

EASE YOUR MIND.

A Word About Ourselves.

I AM not going to tell you a long story about the progress and development of the business from which *P. W.* emanates. All of you who have grown up with the paper, so to speak, from its initiation, eight years and a half ago, know this story well. How the first number was published from a couple of rooms in a building on the Embankment; how, as time went on, and many offspring began to cluster round the parent paper, the staff increased so largely and so rapidly that two huge buildings off the Strand are now scarcely large enough to contain the hundreds of people who are responsible for providing the PEARSON publications. With all this, I say, most of you are familiar. But one fact I fancy my readers do not fully realise, which is, that they are largely responsible for the magnificent development by reason of the warm interest they have taken in the parent paper, and its children from the very beginning. I have many big surprises in hand for 1899, of which I cannot, for obvious reasons, speak publicly at present. One of them, however, I may say, will be exclusively for the benefit of my thousands of foreign and Colonial supporters; and another will be a series of surprise competitions run on absolutely new lines.

J. O. asks if playing the flute is unhealthy; a friend has told him it is so. My dear J. O., playing the flute is regarded as one of the healthiest occupations going. This is probably because it is a species of chest-gymnastics. More air is taken in than usual, and there is not the strain that is necessary in playing some other wind instruments. Whistling is recommended for those whose lungs are weak. By gradual practice in the inspiration of air, the chest becomes broader and the health correspondingly more robust.

P. J. F.—It is quite true that there are lions in Rhodesia; they are becoming decidedly troublesome. As the forest land is cleared, and the animals upon which they prey depart for a more suitable locality—or are shot—the lions do not get enough food, and they pay nocturnal visits to farms and camps. Not long ago three of them took a stroll along the street of Fort Charter and dropped in at the local post office.

A. M. utters a protest against the use of foreign names in street nomenclature. "Why should we have 'Anhalt Road' and 'Bloemfontein Street,' two names I have encountered in different parts of London?" he asks. "Both are difficult of pronunciation, and the second has nothing to recommend it. The first at least has brevity." There certainly seems no reason why our street names should be imported from Germany or South Africa. There may be some excuse for "Hanover Square," but nowadays we can find names for our thoroughfares without having recourse to handbooks of the geography of other countries.

ALEX. LAMONT, of 48 Fabian Street, St. Thomas, Swansea, is the winner of the gold-plated pencil-case in the Rolling Stone Competition, having occupied forty situations during the last ten years.

PER.—You might do worse than try a little cup filled with small shot as a pen-wiper. The pen is thrust into this when done with, and is thus cleansed of ink. This is easy, whereas the ordinary pen-wiper is too troublesome for the business man. Other people use a piece of potato to stick their pens in. Most business men, however, think it more economical just to let the nib rust, and then get another.

SEVERAL correspondents have written to point out in connection with the Note Distribution Scheme, that there is no such thing as a £25 note. I am quite aware of this. Perhaps it would have been clearer to have said that notes to the value of £25 were inclosed in each of the ten envelopes.

OF the uses to which *P. W.* can be put there seems to be no end. I know of cases in which it has been utilised in the most extraordinary manner, and the latest seems to be perhaps the most remarkable of all. A gentleman in South Africa who contributed an article on leopard hunting to a recent number of *ROD AND GUN*, succeeded in shooting one of these creatures and having it carried to the camp. He wanted to measure the length of it, but found that he had no tape available. Somebody, however, obtained a copy of *Pearson's Weekly*, and he says, "with the foot rule on the coloured page which, by the way, as I afterwards tested, is accurate, it measured five feet ten inches."

If any reader has put *P. W.* foot rule to a more useful use, I shall be pleased to give him a gold-plated pencil-case. All attempts must reach here on the back of a post-card, addressed to the "FOOT-RULES EDITOR," to arrive not later than Monday, January 2nd.

W. M. E. has a facetious fit. He asks on the back of a post-card: "Do you know anything at all about editing a paper?" Not a single thing, W. M. E. There was an editor once who knew something about his business, but he died a long time ago—he got so puffed up that his collar strangled him. No, no, I have spent too much of my time answering silly and unnecessary questions to be able to devote any of it to acquiring even the rudiments of the profession.

THIS number is a number of surprises for my readers. You will find on the second page the first instalment of a capital story by Arnold Golsworthy, which you will find nice, light reading, while in another part of the paper appears the first instalment of a splendid serial story by M. P. Shiel, author of the "Empress of the Earth," which created such a sensation during the time it ran in *SHORT STORIES*. Both these tales are well worth beginning, and I should strongly advise you to start in at once.

ELLEN writes to tell me of a curious incident which occurred in connection with her household the other day. She had occasion to suspect her domestic of trying on her articles of clothing while she was out of the house, but was unable to catch her red-handed. However, the other day, while drawing on a pair of gloves, she found in the third finger of the left hand an engagement ring with a paste diamond in the centre of it, worth about half a sovereign. As she recognised this as one she had already seen on the hand of her servant, there was no question about the culprit, who, however, on being taxed, suggested very plausibly that in putting the gloves away the ring must have dropped off, but how it got into the third finger of the left hand glove she did not attempt to explain.

K.—In one of our "little wars" in India, when the British troops were engaged in quieting the rebellious Hunzas on the Kashmir frontier, the natives used as bullets garnets encased in lead. Some of these precious bullets were brought home as curios.

IN further reference to the article dealing with the use of newspapers for wrapping up articles of food, G. K. writes to say that years ago when paper was dear, butchers used to give customers the meat wrapped up in a large vegetable leaf. His idea is that this practice might well be continued now, in spite of the cheapness of paper. And not a bad idea at all. Cabbage leaves are considerably sweeter and cleaner than the average piece of newspaper, and the only chance of unpleasantness is the likelihood of some caterpillar or other objectionable creature still remaining on the leaf.

HYGEIAN wonders why it is that women are so much more subject to coughs, colds and various affections of the lungs than men are. The obvious answer: "Because they are the weaker sex," is not the right one in this case, partly because in the matter of constitution women are no weaker than men. I spoke to a well-known physician about your inquiry the other day, and he said in the course of conversation: "A woman came to me one windy day last week, complaining of a terrible pain in her lungs. As she sat telling me her ills I happened to glance at her feet. They were crossed, and just displayed the prettiest, daintiest, patent leather Oxford shoe and a suspicion of a lace-patterned silk stocking. In a boudoir she would have been irresistible; in my office and in the street she was a suicide." There it is in a nutshell; careful observation on any muddy day will apprise you that nine out of ten of the women who should be best protected from the elements—those whose daily avocations compel them to face all weathers—go clad in shoes, many of German paper composition. Can you wonder at it now?

WELL, did you send in an outline of your right hand last week? If not, you do not know what you have lost, but you will know in a couple of weeks. There is yet time to fulfil the conditions, which you will find in the last number of *P. W.* The date of closing is Tuesday, December 27th.

T. Y. is learning typewriting, and would like to know a sentence that contains all the letters of the alphabet, in order to learn the positions of the letters in a more agreeable way than by merely looking at the keyboard or writing disjointed words. "When I was learning French," he writes, "I was taught by a professor who took us nearly all through the grammar before we read anything more entertaining than 'I have the knife of my neighbour's brother,' and the result was that, when I picked up a newspaper, I had constantly to use a dictionary, although I could parse nearly every sentence I came across. When I studied German, my teacher set me reading almost from the start. It was more agreeable, and I got on more quickly, because I was interested, and felt that I was getting on. I wish to do the same with typewriting." I have observed the same thing in regard to languages. A teacher should study the aptitude of the pupil. Some learn better by plodding along through the grammar and short sentences. However, here is a sentence that will satisfy you: "A quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog."

DOLLY.—The oldest doll in the world is probably that in the British Museum. It is a wooden one, and was taken from the sarcophagus of a little Egyptian princess who lived three hundred years before the Christian era. When the mummy wrappings were unfolded, the little fingers were found to have been placed as though clasping the toy that had given so much pleasure.

H. J.—If the number of people daily entering the City of London had to be dispatched by train at a given time, it would require nearly 2,000 trains, each carrying 600 persons.

A SCHOOLMASTER writes concerning the increase of lying among the children under his tuition. Here are his words: "I have been engaged for the last twenty years in teaching 'the young idea,' and in that time have had several generations, so to call them, of boys through my hands; but I have never seen a class with such a total disregard for the truth as the one I am now endeavouring to prepare for the struggle of life. It may be that I have grown quicker at the detection of inconsistencies, but I do not think that in itself would account for the increase."

I hope SCHOOLMASTER may be unconsciously exaggerating his case, but if not he should confront his mendacious pupils with a doctor. The theory is gaining ground that the habit of "saying things that are not so" is a disease. If you are a born liar you can't be cured, but there is hope for mild cases. The trouble is supposed to arise, like most of the new diseases, from a degenerate condition of the nerves. Rest and tonic, with good nursing, are the antidotes, and some advanced doctors talk vaguely about hypnotism. Naturally, both the sickness and the treatment belong more especially to liars of a larger growth; but, presumably, lying, like other criminal traits, is more or less hereditary, so that both should apply in some degree to the children. I think, however, that these theories should always be subordinated to a judicious use of the strap or its substitute. Little story-tellers, please note.

T. R.—When the Siberian railway is in proper working order it will be possible to make the journey round the world in forty days and at a cost of about £10.

SAHIB.—Wrestling matches are still very popular in India and draw large crowds of spectators. Many rajahs keep their own *pahlwan*, as the wrestler is called, paying him a handsome salary and bestowing a magnificent gift, or a comfortable pension, upon him on his retirement. In a wrestling match at Lahore some time since, the combatants, each employed by a Rajah, received between £250 and £300 for the performance.

ARCHIBALD is in possession of a book bound in human skin, and wants to know if this is anything very remarkable. Not at all. There have been plenty of the kind made before to-day, and they last as a rule very well, provided that the cuticle is properly tanned. I have only heard, however, of one pack of cards having been produced from this gruesome material, and that was one captured from Chief Geronimo of the Apaches.

MEDICO thinks thinks it very hard lines that modern science should be unequal to the task of grappling with such a fruitful source of infection as the interchange of microbes in the commonplace transactions of everyday life. He instances the exchange of microbes caused by paying one's fare and taking a ticket on the bus. Modern science is ready for you this time, MEDICO. The very latest thing in antiseptics is the antiseptic glove, which should meet your objections. At present they are used only in Paris.

C. M.—The tree known as the "leafless acacia" is to be found in some parts of Australasia. It has a little stem that apparently does the duty of a leaf, and through which it respire and takes a proportion of its nourishment.

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